

**PHOTOGRAPHER FIRED
OVER ALTERED PICTURE**



**AP READER WINS
GLOBAL RHS TITLE**

Saturday 15 February 2014

amateur photographer

THE WORLD'S NO.1 WEEKLY PHOTO MAGAZINE

www.amateurphotographer.co.uk



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OLYMPUS OM-D E-M10

Read our first impressions of the most affordable OM-D yet

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SURF & TURF

David Baker reveals how he creates his impressionistic landscapes and seascapes



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Amateur Photographer For everyone who loves photography

WHEN Sony revealed its Alpha 7R, with its 36-megapixel full-frame sensor, it raised the obvious question of how the image quality compares with the only other 36-megapixel full-frame camera on the market, the Nikon D800/D800E. This week we answer that question (see pages 49–54). The Nikon also uses a Sony sensor, probably even the same one. (It's curious how the economics of the industry make it more profitable to sell your best sensor to a competitor before you can use it yourself, but that's another story). To many readers, this contest will be of purely academic interest, like pitting the fastest Ferrari against the fastest Lamborghini to see which wins. Few of us are going to buy either, and in truth,

few us need 36 megapixels of image-capturing power. For many people, buying a 36MP camera would be akin to getting a very big dog and then realising you need to buy a bigger car, a bigger sofa and a house with a bigger garden.

But for those who need fine detail, such as landscape photographers, those who make big prints, or who strive to achieve the finest possible image quality purely for the pleasure of doing so, this test may decide your next purchase.



Nigel Atherton
Group editor

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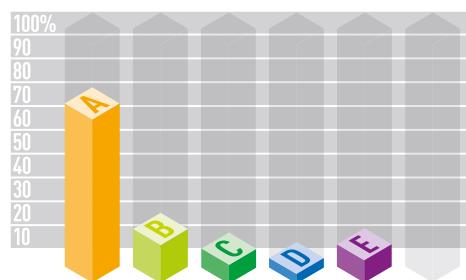
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THE AP READERS' POLL

IN AP 25 JANUARY WE ASKED...

What is your preferred aspect ratio for photography?



YOU ANSWERED...

A 3:2 (eg APS-C and full-frame DSLRs)	68%
B 4:3 (eg micro four thirds and most compacts)	14%
C 1:1 (eg Hasselblad)	7%
D 16:9 (eg panorama mode on many cameras)	2%
E None of the above	9%

THIS WEEK WE ASK...

Would you swap your current camera for a 36-million-pixel version if you could do so at no cost?

VOTE ONLINE www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

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APNews

News | Analysis | Comment 15/2/14

“Breasts are now a ‘potentially dangerous situation’”

Photographer sued over topless photos, page 6

Digital cloning leads to firing • Image ‘violated’ ethics

PHOTOGRAPHER DUMPED OVER ALTERED PICTURE

A PRESS photographer has landed in hot water after admitting to digitally removing a fellow journalist's video camera from an image of the Syrian war that he sent to a global news agency.

The Associated Press (AP) said it has 'severed ties' with Narciso Contreras, who captured the image of a Syrian opposition fighter taking cover from government forces in a mountain-top village on 29 September 2013.

The agency explained that using software to remove the journalist's video camera in the left corner of the frame – by cloning other pieces of the background and pasting them over the camera – 'violated its ethical standards'.

Contreras told the agency he believed the video camera might 'distract viewers', and this was a single case that probably happened at one 'very stressed moment'.

The Mexican-born, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer, who notified AP of his actions only recently, said he regretted the decision and feels 'ashamed'.

The alteration breached AP's requirements for truth and accuracy even though it involved a corner of the image with little news importance, according to the agency's director of photography Santiago Lyon.

When Contreras told the agency's editors of the manipulation, AP reviewed nearly



Associated Press published the manipulated photo alongside the original shot, to highlight the case on its website

500 other photos he had filed since he started working for AP in 2012.

Despite finding no other instances of alteration, AP has cut its links with the photographer and pledged to remove all his photos from its publicly available archive.

While the agency tolerates use of software to lighten or darken photos, it will not countenance 'manipulation of a scene that was not true to reality'.

Contreras, who also freelances for other news organisations, added: 'It happened to me, so I have to accept the consequences.'

He has urged others to learn lessons from his mistake, which he says he 'did not try to hide'.

He said he is a 'living example' for other professionals and aspiring photojournalists 'of what is not correct to do', adding: 'Please take my unfortunate decision as a golden lesson.'

The photographer pledged to continue his work as a freelance photojournalist.

He told *Amateur Photographer*: 'I didn't try to hide my mistake. I prevented one of the AP editors from using the altered picture recently and it brought me severe consequences in my working relationship with the news agency... The industry will be shaken for a while but... we need the public punishment to teach others...'

The photographer's work is widely published, having appeared in newspapers including *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and magazines such as *Time* and *National Geographic*.

However, *The Guardian*'s head of photography, Roger Tooth, says AP made the right decision in sacking him.

'*The Guardian* has the same guidelines for news photography: no cloning, no retouching,' said Tooth in a blog.

SNAP SHOTS

● Pentax DSLRs will be the 'main focus' for Ricoh's camera business in 2014. Ricoh Imaging UK managing director Jonathan Martin said: 'There is a desire to make Pentax a bigger part of the [Ricoh Imaging] business.' Martin added that the challenge for 2014 is to pull consumers away from buying a Canon, Nikon or Sony model.

● Next month Olympus will launch a compact camera designed for the outdoors as it focuses away from low-end models. The TG-850, priced £269.99 and part of the Tough series, features a 21-105mm (35mm equivalent) lens and is built to be shockproof down to 2.1m, waterproof to a depth of 10m, withstand temperatures down to -10°C and 'crushproof' to 100kg. The 16-million-pixel model also features lens-shift image stabilisation.



Do you have a story?

Contact Chris Cheesman
Tel: 0203 148 4129
Fax: 0203 148 8130
amateurphotographer@ipcmmedia.com

SONY TO CUT FACTORY WORKFORCE

SONY has offered early retirement to workers at five factories across Japan – including one that makes cameras – as part of a move to cut costs.

The plants are run by Sony EMCS, a Sony Corporation subsidiary, and reportedly employ around 5,000 staff.

The Sony factory at Kohda, in the Aichi Prefecture, makes cameras,

reportedly Cyber-shot compacts, as well as camera modules.

The Kohda plant is also understood to manufacture interchangeable lenses following the closure of a Sony EMCS site at Minokamo in the Gifu Prefecture that was announced in 2012.

Sony's Alpha 7 and Alpha 7R cameras, however, are made in Thailand, according

to a Sony representative in an interview with *Amateur Photographer* last year.

A Sony spokesperson told us: 'Sony Group continues to review and evaluate its business to ensure it remains flexible and able to respond to the changing market environment.'

'This includes the review of Sony EMCS Corporation, where we have identified an opportunity to optimise personnel resource, in order to drive further efficiency.'

AP
THIS
WEEK
IN...

1896

This week in 1896 AP broached the subject of decorative photography, more specifically 'photographic impressions on unprepared wood', learning lessons from a photo club in Paris. 'From this authority we learn that photographic decorations are now made by simply exposing white wood - pine wood, for example - under a negative to the sun for a fortnight and varnishing the darkened image which results. The image has a pleasant yellowish-brown tint, and from what is said we conjecture that the varnish must in some way prevent the further action of light, as our contemporary asserts that impressions two years old show no sign of change.'

DECORATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY—PHOTOGRAPHIC IMPRESSIONS ON UNPREPARED WOOD.

WHAT should be an extremely pretty application of photography to the decoration of wood panels or other fittings is briefly described by the "Bulletin of the Photo. Club of Paris." From this authority we learn that photographic decorations are now made by simply exposing white wood—pine wood, for example—under a negative to the sun for a fortnight and varnishing the darkened image which results. The image has a pleasant yellowish-brown tint, and from what is said we conjecture that the varnish must in some way prevent the further action of light, as our contemporary asserts that impressions two years old show no signs of change.

We can at present only conjecture that the varnish has a protective power, which, given that the tinted image is due to some interchange in the fibrous and sappy matters of the wood, is quite conceivable; the varnish might fill up the pores and cells of the wood, and, being itself an inert body, would prevent any further action resulting from exposure to light.

CLUB NEWS

Club news from around the country

SAWTRY CAMERA CLUB

Sawtry Camera Club in Cambridgeshire is looking for new members, reports the *Peterborough Telegraph*. The club meets on the second Thursday of each month at Sawtry Ex-Service & Working Men's Club, 10 Gidding Road, Sawtry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 5TS. For details email club treasurer John Boardman at john@windgather.com or call 01487 831 937.



Drama over Empire State Building photos PHOTOGRAPHER SUED OVER TOPLESS PICS

A PHOTOGRAPHER says he is being sued for more than \$1m over an image of a bare-breasted woman at the top of the Empire State Building in New York.

Fashion photographer and filmmaker Allen Henson says he has received a \$1.1m lawsuit from management of the popular tourist attraction, who reportedly claim that the photo damaged the landmark's 'reputation as a safe and secure family friendly tourist attraction'.

It appears management filed the lawsuit after the image - one of a series Henson took using a mobile phone - was uploaded to a social media website.

Henson insists that he was not staging a shoot for commercial reasons, but was taking pictures of a friend on the 86th-floor observation deck of the building on 9

August last year.

In a statement, Henson told AP: 'This was shot on a cellphone... No gallery show, no ad campaign, they didn't even go in the portfolio.'

'There are easily hundreds of thousands of tourist Empire State Building Instagram pictures shot in exactly the same capacity - no permission asked or granted.'

A spokeswoman for the Empire State Realty Trust had yet to reply to AP's request for comment at the time of writing.

Henson added: 'My capacity as a professional photographer doesn't mean that every time I touch a device with a camera on it - which is [just] about everything these days - I'm conducting a commercial shoot.'

The New York-based photographer claims that the lawsuit is 'baseless and ill-conceived'.

'Breasts are now a "potentially dangerous situation" - this document is vilifying breasts,' he added.

The lawsuit was filed at the New York Supreme Court.



SNAP SHOTS

● The RPS has urged amateurs worldwide to enter its competition, for the chance to win cash prizes along with Gold, Silver and Bronze awards. Both film and digitally captured entries are eligible. Initial entry for the International Print Exhibition is online and the closing date is 18 March 2013. Visit www.rps.org/157.

● A colour instant film for Polaroid SX-70-type cameras has been launched by the Impossible Project. The film, which prints 'glossy' images with gold-coloured frames, takes around 30mins to develop at 21°C, says its maker. It costs £21.99 for a pack of eight exposures. Visit www.the-impossible-project.com.

● Samsung's first 'premium' S-series lens, the 16-50mm f/2.8 S ED OIS, will cost £1,079.99 and is due at the end of this month. The new 16-50mm f/3.5-5.6 Power Zoom ED OIS, due in shops at the end of March, will cost £279.99. The NX30 CSC costs £899.99 with an 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom.

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Magazine masterclass leads to RHS plaudits

AP READER WINS GLOBAL GARDEN TITLE

A BRITISH street photographer has triumphed in the RHS Garden Photographer of the Year competition.

Heather Buckley, who is based in Brighton, eclipsed thousands of entries worldwide with a 'striking image' of foxgloves in gardens at Great Dixter House in Rye, East Sussex.

It turns out that the winning image was captured by Heather during an *Amateur Photographer Masterclass* hosted by landscape photographer Tom Mackie, for five AP readers, last year.

Heather, who describes herself as a 'street and people photographer', said the £1,000 win was a 'great honour' and that she is thrilled with the chance to show her work to a wider audience.

The photographer explained that she chose to shoot the flower image in her usual 'street style', rather than as a close-up picture.

'Using my wideangle lens, in this case a fisheye, I spent most of the afternoon trying to get this shot, taking the usual viewpoint of looking up through the towering pink foxgloves at the bees.'

Chris Young, Editor of *The Garden*



© HEATHER BUCKLEY

magazine and one of the judges, said: 'The winning image, which demonstrates a fusion of skilful photography, patience and opportunity, is a perfect fit for the RHS Photographic Competition, as it celebrates

the essential relationship between plants and wildlife.'

RHS Young Photographer of the Year was named as Mateusz Piesiak, 17, from Poland.



© SIMON MORRIS

UK ENTHUSIASTS ON SONY SHORTLIST

TEN PHOTOGRAPHY enthusiasts are among 25 UK photographers shortlisted for this year's Sony World Photography Awards.

Their entries were plucked from nearly 140,000 submissions from 166 countries – the highest number of entries in the competition's seven-year history.

Shortlisted in the Open category, which is judged on a single image, are Kristan Akerman; Alf Bailey; Andrew Bailey; Sean Batten; Simon Butterworth; Jim Grover; Colin Hogan; Simon Martin; Simon Morris (see image above); and Mandy Watts.

Judges commended 33 images captured by Brits across the ten Open categories.

The winner will pocket \$5,000 and will be announced on 30 April.

FORMER OWNER REUNITED WITH M2 AFTER 30 YEARS

A PHOTOGRAPHER has told how he was reunited with his first Leica, an M2, after three decades.

Paul Salmon bought the second-hand Leica M2 in 1982 after finishing a documentary photography course in Newport, South Wales, run by Magnum photographer David Hurn.

Paul used it on newspaper and magazine photographic assignments worldwide – until 1984, when he sold it to a shop in Leeds as part of a plan to upgrade his camera equipment.

Fortunately, Paul had decided to have



COURTESY PAUL SALMON

his name engraved on the camera body beforehand.

'I never saw my old M2 again... until now,' Salmon told AP.

'On Boxing Day 2013, I received an email from the new owner of my first-ever Leica.'

'It transpired that he had bought the camera from a Spanish University lecturer living in Madrid, although [the new owner] is based in Paris.'

'Intrigued by the engraving on the back, he had decided to try an online search for "P Salmon" – and found my website.'

'The "reunion" was certainly a joyful one.'

QUARTET OF POLAROID BRIDGE CAMERAS UNVEILED

POLAROID camera maker Sakar International has unveiled four Wi-Fi-enabled bridge cameras, including a model with a 50x optical zoom called the iE5036W.

Due out in the spring, there is also a model with a 30x zoom (iE3035W), another with a 40x zoom (iE4038W) and one with a 35x lens.

There is no word on UK pricing, but

in the US the 50x model is expected to cost \$299.

Last year, Nikon accused Sakar International, a US firm, of patent infringement and forced Sakar to stop manufacturing and selling the Polaroid iM1836, an interchangeable-lens camera.

Industry watchers had likened the looks of the Polaroid iM1836 to the Nikon 1 J1/J2 cameras.



GET AP WITHOUT LEAVING THE HOUSE!



One of Laura's series of images that won the Terry O'Neill title

Pics highlight female education

YEMENI PORTRAITS WIN TERRY O'NEILL AWARD

PORTRAITS highlighting the problems Yemeni girls face when accessing higher education have won this year's Terry O'Neill Award.

Palestinian freelance photographer Laura Boushnak triumphed in the annual contest with a series of photos of women who were the first in their families to consider higher education.

Laura's project, which won the Portraiture category, was entitled: 'I Read I Write: Yemen-Access to Education'.

Commenting on the images, Laura, who was born in Kuwait, said: 'They spoke about their

achievements, challenges and dreams, in an ultra-conservative society where many believe that women are destined for marriage to protect their chastity and their role is solely in the home.'

Javier Arcenillas, who topped the reportage category, was named overall runner-up.

Award judge Lord Puttnam, said: 'I love the images we chose and I hope, when published, that they have the same impact on others as they had on me.'

The winners, announced last month, were selected from a shortlist of 50.

SNAP SHOTS

● Outdoor 'adventure' photographers are set to give talks at The Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show, which takes place in London from 13-16 February. The speaker line-up includes Martin Hartley, a travel/expedition photographer who has documented polar assignments. Entry to the talks is included in the ticket price for the show, which costs £16 if booked in advance or £20 on the door. The show takes place at the ExCeL centre in East London. For details visit www.telegraphoutdoorshow.co.uk.

● A soldier who was injured while serving in Afghanistan has turned his photography passion into a new career. Martyn Cowd has 'swapped the frontline for a fisheye lens' and is now offering wedding and portraiture workshops in the Taunton area of Somerset. For details visit www.martyncowdphotography.co.uk.

In next week's AP

On sale Tuesday 18 February

HANDS-ON

FUJIFILM X-T1

We test Fuji's new 16.3-million-pixel CSC, which initiates a new line in the X series



TRAVEL



THE STORYTELLER

Travel Photographer of the Year **Timothy Allen** on his win and how his pictures tell stories

SONY ALPHA 5000

ON TEST



We put the 20.1MP, 'smallest and lightest' Wi-Fi-enabled CSC through its paces

PANASONIC 42.5MM F/1.2 LENS

ON TEST

We test the firm's new ultra-fast **Leica DG Nocticron** lens and assess its quality



TECHNIQUE

FREELENSING

Create creamy defocused effects without a tilt-and-shift lens or Photoshop



CONTENT FOR NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Canon has announced a new wireless A3 printer aimed at photo enthusiasts

CANON ANNOUNCES NEW A3 PRINTER

THE PIXMA iP8750 features a six-ink system and is claimed by Canon to produce an A3 print in around 2mins.

The 8.5kg newcomer is Wi-Fi compatible and measures 590x331x159mm.

Designed to print at a resolution of 9600x2400dpi, the Pixma iP8750 costs £349.99 and is due in UK shops this month.

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REDUCED TO PERFECTION

OM-D



AP hands-on Olympus OM-D E-M10

It's more affordable than its two siblings, but the new **Olympus OM-D E-M10** is no entry-level model. **Richard Sibley** gives his first impressions of the new micro four thirds camera after handling it at the recent CES expo

FOLLOWING the success of the Olympus OM-D E-M1 and E-M5, it was no surprise when Olympus launched its 16-million-pixel OM-D E-M10 at the Consumer Electronics Show in the USA. Although the new camera is less expensive than the previous two models in the OM-D range, it has all the features you would expect of an Olympus micro four thirds system camera, including high-quality construction.

With the entry-level market particularly difficult to crack, Olympus isn't aiming the OM-D E-M10 at first-time users. Instead, the new camera will be in direct competition with the Canon EOS 700D and Nikon D5300 DSLRs.

The reason for this, according to Olympus, is that around 90% of entry-level DSLR users never upgrade from their initial camera or lens, compared with 50% of

advanced entry-level users who go on to buy another camera and additional lenses. And this is precisely the user at which the Olympus OM-D E-M10 is targeted.

KEY FEATURES

Many of the features of the Olympus OM-D E-M10 have been borrowed from the two more advanced cameras in the range. However, although the OM-D E-M10 uses the 16.1-million-pixel four-thirds CMOS sensor found in the OM-D E-M5, it has the same TruePic VII image-processing system found in the more advanced E-M1. The new camera also has a Fine Detail II engine, which can apply distortion and aberration adjustments to images based on the exact Olympus lens and aperture being used.

One new feature of the OM-D E-M5 is the 1.44-million-dot EVF, which has a 100% field of view and an impressive

AT A GLANCE

- 16.1-million-pixel, four-thirds Live MOS sensor
- 1.44-million-dot EVF
- Three-axis image stabilisation
- Wi-Fi connectivity
- Aluminium construction
- £529.99 body only

'The Olympus OM-D E-M10 has the same high build quality as the other cameras in the OM-D range'

refresh rate of 120 frames per second. During our meeting with Olympus, the company's representatives were keen to demonstrate the speed of the EVF – by showing us a video featuring the viewfinder of the OM-D E-M10 and the arm of a metronome. The arm of the metronome was visible both through the viewfinder and in the scene, and as it moved back and forth there was no discernible lag between the real view and the same scene displayed in the EVF. This is certainly something we look forward to investigating further in a full test of the camera.

The OM-D E-M10 has the same articulated 3in screen as that found on other OM cameras, but it also has a built-in pop-up flash, which was omitted from its more advanced siblings. This should be a welcome inclusion for those who want an occasional touch of fill-in flash, while for more demanding users there is a hotshoe.

Another difference found in the OM-D E-M10 is that it employs a three-axis in-camera stabilisation system – correcting for yaw, pitch and roll – rather than the five-axis version in the E-M1 and E-M5. This allows the OM-D E-M10 to maintain its small size.

For still images Olympus is content with stabilising across three axes, but the company did want to improve the stabilisation for video. The result is a hybrid system that combines the mechanical and



AP's deputy technical editor Michael Topham was also on hand to try the new Olympus OM-D E-M10



electronic stabilisation that adjusts the pixels used by the sensor when recording video footage to reduce wobble.

To ensure sharp images, the OM-D E-M10 uses Olympus's Fast AF contrast-detection AF system with 81 target AF areas. It is possible to change the size of the AF target, as well as using spot AF for more precise focusing on smaller subjects. The AF system is capable of focusing in as little as 0.13sec. The speed of the focusing may seem a little slower on paper than some of the competition, but I didn't notice any significant difference in the short time I had with the camera. It will be interesting to put the OM-D E-M10 up against some competition in a full test.

Along with the OM-D E-M10, Olympus also revealed a new collapsible 14-42mm kit lens



CONNECTIVITY

With built-in Wi-Fi, the OM-D E-M10 can transfer images quickly to a smartphone or tablet. Pairing the two devices is made easier through the use of QR codes, rather than opting for NFC. Once connected, not only can images be shared, but the camera can also be fully controlled from a mobile device, including the ability to focus and adjust exposure settings. If you are using the new M. Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 EZ lens, you can even control the zoom via a smartphone. From what I saw, it is a very comprehensive system for remote triggering and should be useful for long-exposure or wildlife photography.

Above: The controls on the rear of the new OM-D E-M10 have been changed from the rather fiddly buttons of the E-M5

Below: The E-M10 retains the same style as other cameras in the OM-D line-up



BUILD AND HANDLING

Unlike the Fujifilm X-A1 and X-M1, the OM-D E-M10 maintains the quality build of its predecessors. The new Olympus camera has an aluminium construction, with the basic design being very similar to the E-M5. However, the E-M10 is smaller, with a few millimetres shaved off each dimension in comparison to the E-M5. The front and rear dials have also been rearranged to allow the body of the E-M10 to be smaller, while still maintaining maximum control.

The E-M10 has an optional grip that has a quick-release section on the bottom. This section is easily removable so the battery can be accessed without having to unscrew the grip from the camera's tripod mount.

Unfortunately, unlike the others in the OM-D range, the E-M10 is not weather-sealed, so those who really like to get out in all weathers should opt for the E-M5.

INITIAL THOUGHTS

The Olympus OM-D E-M10 has the same high build quality as the other cameras in the OM-D range. In the hand, the E-M10 feels like a smaller version of the E-M5, but with arguably simpler controls that make it nicer to use.

The E-M10 may lack weather-sealing, but it maintains the essence of the OM-D line-up. If this new camera can produce the images to match its build quality, the E-M10 is bound to be a popular enthusiast compact system camera. It may even be used as a backup model by those with an E-M1 who want something smaller for everyday use.

The Olympus OM-D E-M10 will be available this month, price £529.99 body only or £699.99 with the M. Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm f/3.5-5.6 EZ lens. **AP**

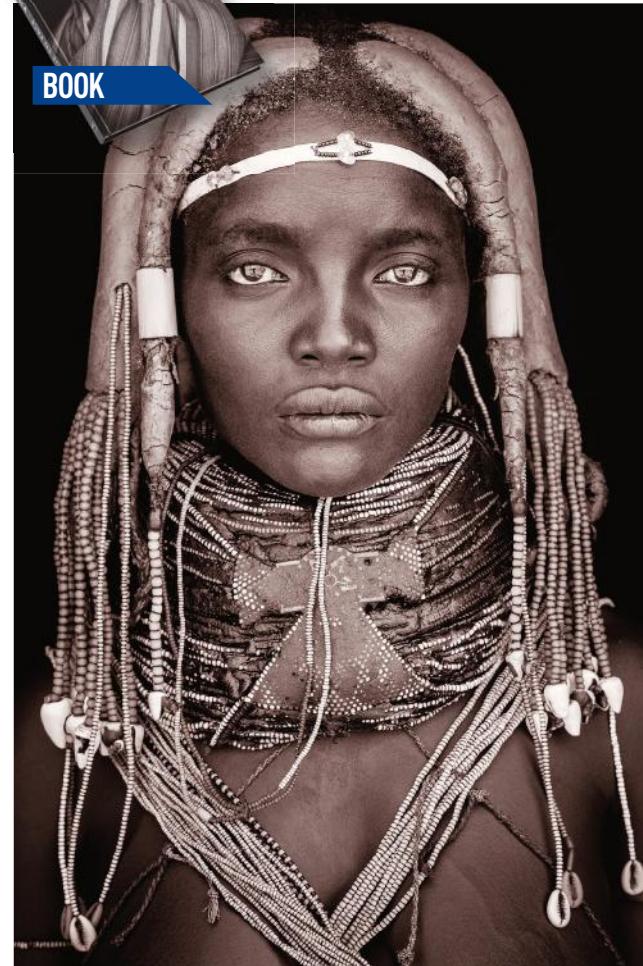
APReview

The latest photography books, exhibitions and websites. By Jon Stapley

Facing Africa

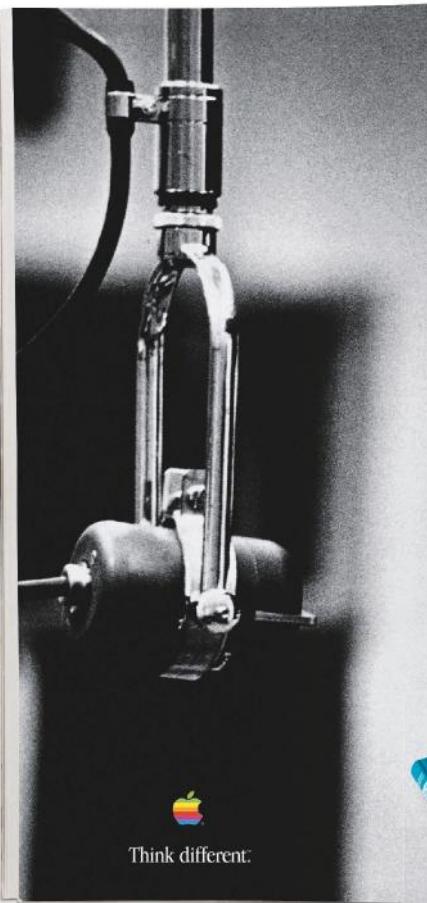
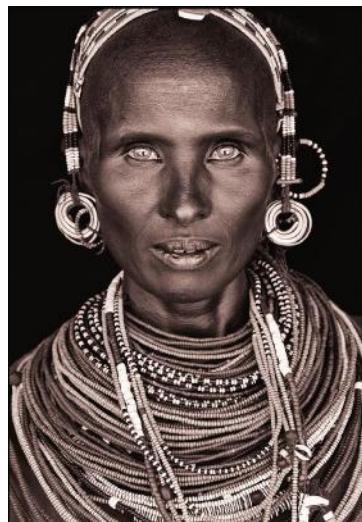
By John Kenny. 5 Continents, £30, hardback, 113 pages, ISBN 978-8-874-39636-8

BOOK



BRITISH photographer John Kenny documents the indigenous cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa in a series of 45 stylised portraits. Photography buffs will have a fine time mulling over the particulars of Kenny's lighting set-up, which appears to create a central channel of strong light that gives his portraits their distinctive look. Interestingly, the photographer and/or set-up are reflected in the pupils of most subjects, and once you notice it's hard not to dwell on it. However, it's worth taking a step back to absorb the whole of each portrait, with the traditional African dress, body art and jewellery unique facets of cultures that may face extinction in an uncertain future.

Amateur
Photographer
★★★★★



Think different.

Game Changers: The Evolution of Advertising

Edited by Peter Russell and Senta Slingerland. Taschen, £44.99, hardback, 312 pages, ISBN 978-3-836-54524-2

IT'S EASY to underestimate the extent to which an effective advert can affix itself indelibly onto our collective consciousness. I can easily write a few words that for people of the appropriate age, nationality or disposition, will just instantly click: 'A Mars a day...', 'Got Milk?', 'Just Do It' – you get the picture.

Advertising's need to combine impact with succinctness makes it a natural partner for photography. This curation of the most impactful, infamous or memorable adverts uncovers the extent of research and creative

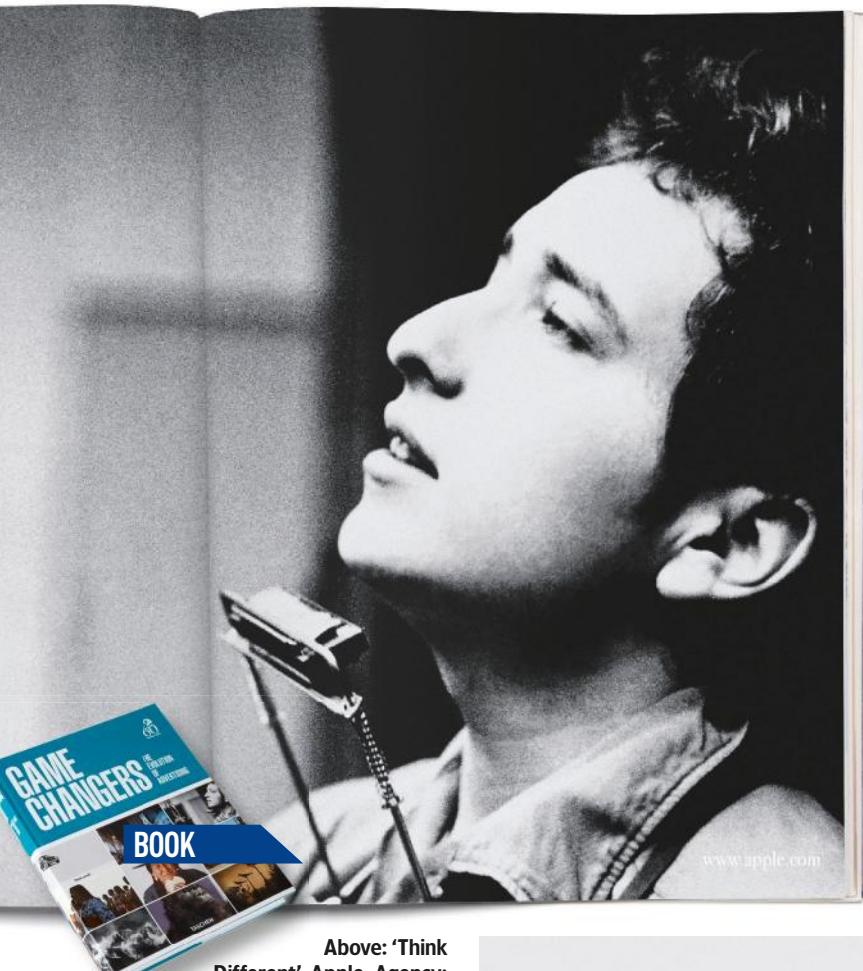
Tom Wood: Men and Women

Until 14 March. Belfast Exposed, The Exchange Place, 23 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2FF. Tel: 028 9023 0965. Website: www.belfastexposed.org. Open Tue-Sat 11am-5pm. Admission free

THIS exhibition at Belfast Exposed, which made its debut at The Photographers' Gallery, is a new organisation of Tom Wood's Men and Women collection. Wood has been photographing people in their natural environments for 40 years now, and has revisited his archives specially for this collection. Some of his images have a street sensibility to them, while others feel more like straight portraiture with subjects staring down the barrel of the lens, but all retain a spontaneous quality that belies the depth of the stories you can infer if you look closely enough. He achieves this by allowing people to remain in their natural environments. His resolutely British images recall the likes of Tony Ray-Jones and Martin Parr. Equally comfortable with colour and black & white, Wood is remarkable for how his work rejects series and categories, and is easy to treat as a single sprawling body.



EXHIBITION



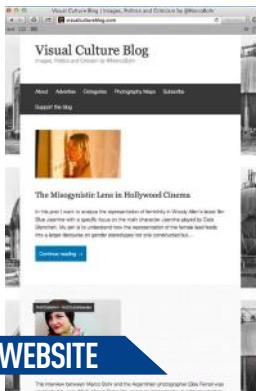
Above: 'Think Different', Apple, Agency: TBWA Chiatday, 1997, USA

Right: 'Think Small', Volkswagen, Agency: DDB, 1959, USA

debate that went into famous campaigns and single ads. There's a nice contribution from David Bailey regarding some of his advertising work, as well as enjoyable dissections of such landmarks in advertising as Wonderbra's infamous 'Hello Boys' and political campaigns such as 1979's 'Labour Isn't Working' from Thatcher's Conservatives (which, in an interesting titbit typical of the book, the Iron Lady herself initially hated). Absorbing, if you like this kind of thing.



www.visualcultureblog.com



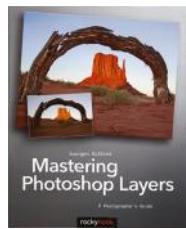
MARCO Bohr applies a critical lens to the world of contemporary visuals in a blog that focuses not only on photography but also other aspects of visual art and culture, such as film, television and advertising. With a broad mix of subjects, Bohr does his research and discusses why and how images work and what we can learn from them. Some of his posts take a feminist stance as he dissects representations of the female body in contemporary culture. Others are more political, such as his expert dismantling of the photography in many of *The Sun's* recent anti-'benefits scroungers' stories. The blog is updated regularly with fresh, original content, and is worth getting into.

WEBSITE

subscribe 0844 848 0848

CONDENSED READING

A round-up of the latest photography books on the market



● MASTERING PHOTOSHOP LAYERS

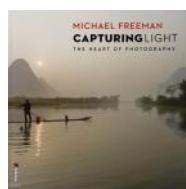
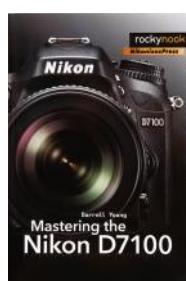
by Juergen Gulbins, £34.50

It's a testament to the depth and potential of Photoshop that a single one of its features can warrant an entire book detailing how to use it. Juergen Gulbins' guide, which nears 300 pages, offers all the detail you could want and then some. With helpful diagrams and specific example images to illustrate exactly how layers were used to create individual effects, the book manages to do a credible job of making it all look easy.

● MASTERING THE NIKON D7100

by Darrell Young, £30.99

The successor to the Nikon D7000 proved extremely popular on release, thanks in no small part to its excellent image quality and (relatively) competitive price. It's a well-featured enthusiast DSLR, and as such you could argue that it's pitched towards people who would have little use for a printed guide. The advantage of picking up Darrell Young's book, though, is that the functionality of the D7100 is so extensive there may well be a few features you've never even thought of using, which Young explains in detail.



● CAPTURING LIGHT

by Michael Freeman, £19.99

On his website, Michael Freeman has more than 30 books listed on photography alone. He is quite simply an astonishingly prolific author and very much deserves his status as an authority on photography. His latest book continues the fine tradition of being very good indeed, taking in turn the three approaches to photographic light: wait for it, chase it or modify it. The images are great, and the words are too – it's another easy win from Mr Freeman.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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THE STORY OF A FRIENDSHIP

When I read Tom Dalzell's experiences with his first real camera (*Letters*, AP 21–28 December 2013), it brought back many memories of my own.

It was in 1949, when I was 12 years old and a keen photographer with my newly acquired Agfa box camera, that I was poking about in my old aunt's spare bedroom and came across a Rodenstock f/4.5 Prontor 11, complete with tripod. I told my mother of my find, and she asked her sister about it. She was told that Ted, my aunt's husband, brought it back from Germany after the war. Apparently, Ted went over on D-Day, and on his way through Germany the German people would give anything for coffee. He was an Army cook and had no bother getting coffee, so he traded a jar for it the camera and tripod.

My aunt agreed to sell it to mum for ten shillings [50p], and on my birthday I became the proud owner of the Rodenstock. It's a nice little camera that never failed to deliver a good photo. I used it through my national service in 1958 in Singapore and Malaya with 6 Coy RASC. I still have it and it works as good now as when I first acquired it. It's now been retired and replaced with a SLR and a Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ40, but I would never part with my little Rodenstock because of its history.

Brian Jones, Berkshire

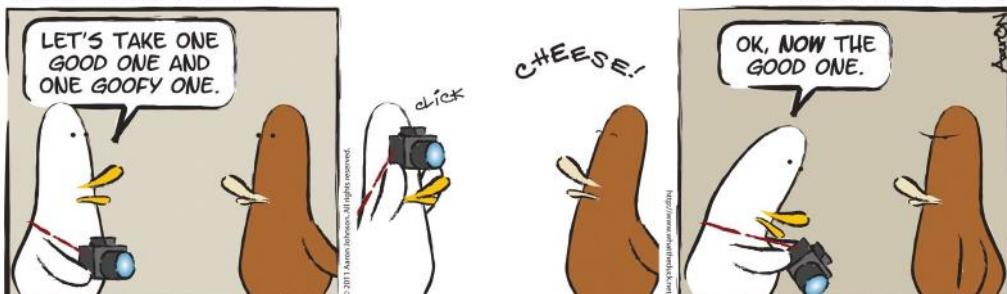
COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY

Do we really need to spend all our free time working on our pictures in image software? Probably not, as I think all this stuff about Layers and Curves and suchlike is a waste of time and effort. If we think back to the days of film and about all the great photographers of the time, did any of them work in the way we do now? No, they did not, because there was no need to for them use Layers or apply any sharpening. If an image is sharp at the time of taking, why do

we need to apply sharpening? If the image is out of focus, then no amount of sharpening will make it sharp. And why do we need to use Layers?

If, say, a photographer working in the 1970s and '80s wanted to remove a blemish from a model's skin, he would use tools like a pencil and maybe a few drops of photographic dye to draw over that blemish. It seems to me that the only tools we need are things like the Dodge and Burn tools, the Healing Brush and sometimes the Clone tool

What The Duck



to remove unwanted background objects. So why do photographic publications insist on telling us that sharpening and Layers and the like are needed, and are an important part of the process? This digital age is slowly destroying the art of photography, as anyone with a camera or phone can go out and take photos, play with them in image software and then call them pictures.

I don't do any of this sharpening or layers stuff. All I do is adjust the exposure, crop, adjust the saturation, and then, when I am happy, I print the picture.

Sean Dempsey, Hertfordshire

Write to...

'Letters' at the usual AP address (see page 3) fax to 020 3148 8130 or email to amateurphotographer@ipcmedia.com and include your full postal address

Earn £50 Backchat

Send your thoughts or views (about 500 words) to 'Backchat' at the usual AP address (see page 3). A fee of £50 will be paid on publication

Sean, no one is forcing you to do anything. It's your hobby, and if you're happy with your results that's all that counts. But if you were to peruse the best images on Flickr or in the prestigious competitions, you'd probably find that most were skilfully processed from raw files, with curves and sharpening adjustments applied... maybe even using Layers. These tools are used to overcome the limitations in the way that digital sensors work, and to give photographers more control over the final image. Film works in a different way, but many of the classic images of the past, from the landscapes of Ansel Adams to the fashion and portraiture of Horst and Penn, were the result of extensive darkroom manipulation and/or heavy airbrushing which was highly skilled. If you accept that photography is a creative art form rather than just a simple recording medium, you'll see that cameras, film and software are all just tools to use as we wish, in our quest to produce images that match our vision of what we saw in our mind's eye – Nigel Atherton, Group Editor

A LIGHT-BULB MOMENT

In explaining how photographers can benefit from using a high-megapixel sensor, Eric Begbie (*Backchat*, AP 25 January) states: 'Post-exposure processing of digital image files is data processing, pure and simple.' Reading that was like an epiphany for me. Suddenly a light bulb switched on in my head.

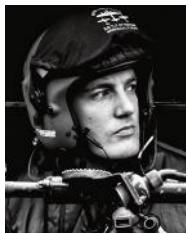
Until now, I have always thought of clicking the shutter button as 'taking a picture'. Now I can think of it as 'collecting data' – and what a difference that makes to my approach to photography. Instead of just snapping scenes, I will be acquiring the raw materials for artistic creativity. Thank you, Eric.

Eric begins the final sentence of his article with the words: 'Purists might shudder...' I suspect he is also correct in that observation, but I for one found his treatise stimulating and liberating.

James D Brown, Moray

AN ODD COUPLE?

Why did you carry out your resolution and noise test assessments for the Nikon Df using a Sigma 105mm f/2.8 Macro lens set at f/5.6 (AP 18 January)? Surely, it would have been more appropriate to use a



GRAHAM TAYLOR
Senior Aircraftman
Graham Taylor was until recently an official photographer at RAF Coningsby, and was named Photographer of the Year in the Force's official photographic competition for 2013. He has since accepted a photography job at Kahn Design, an 'automotive fashion house' that works with exclusive and exotic cars.

PHOTO INSIGHT

Graham Taylor was crowned RAF Photographer of the Year for 2013 with a portfolio from his time with the Air Force. He talks us through this spectacular shot of a Spitfire

THE IMAGE was taken on 24 April 2013 at Royal Air Force (RAF) Coningsby in Lincolnshire. All display teams undergo an annual 'Public Display Authority' (PDA) in front of the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) to ensure their displays are up to par and, most importantly, that they are safe. This one was for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, which was (unusually) taking place late in the day. All the pilots fly their respective aircraft type and are signed off by the AOC once they have passed.

For this particular shot I was standing on the grass behind the Spitfire. As RAF photographers, when we're on a station like this we're fairly privileged to be able to move freely around the aircraft, usually under the watchful eye of the technicians who will make sure we don't wander into any of the danger areas. This aircraft was being used by successive pilots, which meant the engine was still warm when it was started. A warm engine does not need as much fuel priming as a cold one. Priming is not an exact science, even more so with a warm engine, and if there is an excess of fuel it will flame until the engine starts. This is called a 'hot start'.

I was positioned behind the aircraft, ready to capture whatever happened. I'd had plenty of time to check and recheck the angle I wanted. I'd had an inkling that I might see some flames, but a lot of it still



© GRAHAM TAYLOR

boils down to coincidence and sheer luck. I was lucky about the time of day – PDAs usually take place around lunchtime. If this one had, then the sun would have been in a completely different place and would have changed the lighting of the entire scene. Also, if the pilot hadn't slightly overprimed the engine, then the picture would have disappeared into my portfolio along with hundreds of other Spitfire shots that aren't bad but don't particularly capture the imagination. I had thought about every aspect of the image, but it was still good luck that turned it from an average photo into something I'm really proud of.

This shot was taken on a Nikon D700 with 70-200mm f/2.8 lens. I started shooting with the D700 purely because

it was full frame, and we'd had a couple delivered as part of our contingency kit for deployments at a time when our D3 bodies were being cleaned. I find it just as capable in most situations as the D3 and the fact it has a self-cleaning sensor means it's usually the one I head out with. As for the lens, I love the compression that a long focal length provides and the quality of glass on the Nikon f/2.8G lenses is sublime. My favourite is the 300mm f/2.8G that I tend to use whenever I have the opportunity. However, while it's great being able to use a lens that costs the same as a Toyota Supra, I can't put my hand on my heart and tell people that it's the most influential thing that has ever happened to my photography.

I would say the digital darkroom process

To see more of Graham Taylor's images, visit www.rogue86.com



'I'd had an inkling that I might see some flames, but a lot of it still boils down to coincidence and sheer luck'

(specifically Photoshop in my case) is probably the most important aspect of my workflow. I think people are often put off by editing, with the mindset that it somehow takes away the purity of photography, but certainly for commercial work editing could be the key to make your images stand out. You don't have to spend days with your head in front of the PC screen to make a great image (I've never spent more than 10mins editing a single image), but I think the use of editing software is

probably the most misunderstood dark art in photography today.

I wanted to use a longer lens to compress the features of the aircraft and make them really stand out. Shooting low, along the fuselage, allowed me to use the aircraft to mask a busy background. Compositionally, the aircraft frames the shot, and the negative space enhances the colour of both the flame and the sky. There are a few details within the shot that show the aircraft is on the ground, so the intention

was never to make the aircraft appear as though it was in the air, but I wanted the shot to be about the Spitfire and not anything else around it.

This was one of the images in the portfolio that won me the title of RAF Photographer of the Year. It was a shock to win, but it obviously felt great! Aerial photography is the thing I enjoy most about this job. I've always loved flying, but more specifically it's speed I'm in love with. I had posters of fast cars and fast jets adorning my walls as a child and it's something I've never really grown out of. Even in my job, I'd like to think I photograph everything to the best of my ability, but it's only when photographing cars or aircraft that I feel like I can really convey a passion across. **AP**

**Graham Taylor
was talking to
Jon Stapley**

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CHANGING HAIR COLOUR



MARTIN EVENING

Martin Evening is a London-based advertising photographer and noted expert in both photography and digital imaging. As a successful photographer, Martin is well known in London for his fashion and beauty work, for which he has won several awards. In 2008, he was inducted into the NAPP Photoshop Hall of Fame.

Martin has worked with the Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom engineering teams over many years and is one of the founding members of Pixel Genius, a software design company producing automated production and creative plug-ins for Photoshop.

His recent books include *The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5 Book*, *Adobe Photoshop CC for Photographers*, as well as the *Adobe Photoshop for Photographers: The Ultimate Workshop* series, which he co-wrote with Jeff Schewe.



Martin Evening's

Retoucher's Guide

Martin Evening explains how to change hair colour using Photoshop

IN THE course of my work I am often asked to change the hair colour of a model. I adopted the following colouring technique after watching a seminar demonstration by Jim D'Vitale, where he showed how using three colouring layers, each using a different blend mode, allows you to fine-tune the colouring

effect by adjusting the opacities of the individual layers.

In the example shown here, you can see that by step 5, using the Color blend mode achieved a pretty good result. In a lot of instances the Color blend mode on its own is all you really need. However, if you compare the result at step 5 with

the finished result, the addition of extra colouring layers allowed me to produce a more richer-looking colour effect on the hair. The steps shown here can work well on all kinds of subjects and not just hair. You can use this Photoshop technique to colourise almost any kind of object.



1 This shows the original raw photograph with Basic panel adjustments applied via Lightroom. I darkened the Exposure slightly to bring out more detail in the clothes and boosted the contrast.



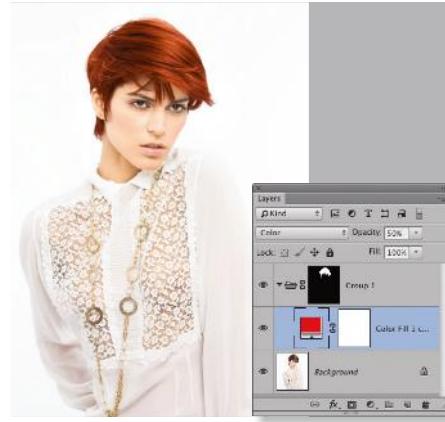
2 In this step I selected the Adjustment Brush and created a lightening exposure adjustment, which I applied to the head of the model. This allowed me to lighten the skin tones and hair, but without further lightening the clothes.



3 I then used Cmd/Ctrl+E to open the image in Photoshop, where I created a new layer group above the Background layer and added a layer mask to this. For the following steps it isn't necessary to edit the mask, but for this tutorial it worked best to create a precise mask first.



4 I now wanted to colourise the hair. To do this, I added a Color Fill layer inside the masked layer group using the settings shown here in the Color Picker dialog, to apply a red colour.



5 The last step simply added a solid color fill above the photo image layer. I then changed the blend mode from Normal to Color and set the layer opacity to 50%. The Color blend mode is good for colouring things.



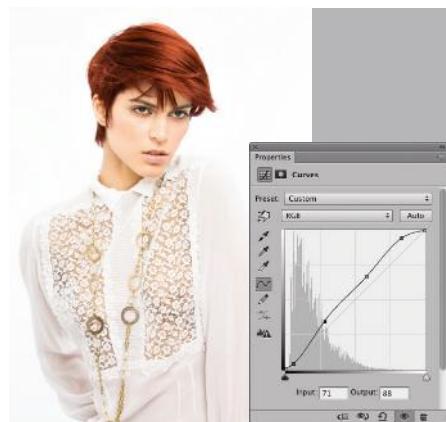
6 I then dragged the Color layer to the New Layer button in the Layers panel to create a duplicate layer. With this layer I set the blend mode to Overlay and set the layer Opacity to 25%. This step added more richness to the modified hair colour.



7 I repeated the last step, making a second copy of the Color Fill layer. This time I set the blend mode to Multiply. In this instance, I set the layer Opacity to 10%. This third Color Fill layer added a little more depth to the hair contrast.



8 Having created this set of three Color Fill layers inside a masked layer group, I was now able to edit the opacity of the individual layers to tweak the new hair colour effect. In this step I set the Color layer to 35%, the Overlay Layer Opacity to 15% and the Multiply layer Opacity to 20%.



9 Finally, I added a Curves adjustment layer masked using the same hair mask as before, and set the blend mode to Luminosity. I then applied the curve shape shown here to add more tone contrast to the highlights. The intention was to add more shine to the hair.

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ROUND 2
LIFE IN MOTION

The comeback kid

Aaron Yeoman, who finished third in APOY 2013, talks to **Jon Stapley** about his spectacular revival in the final stages of the year's competition

AMATEUR Photographer of the Year can be a gruelling process. Ten months of intense photographic competition is not for the faint-hearted, and it's easy to lose your motivation to try your hardest when a few consecutive months of *nil points* sees you slipping further and further away from the coveted leader board. Might as well pack it in as you'll never catch up now. Maybe next year, right?

Frankly, it's a good thing Aaron Yeoman didn't think like this hypothetical defeatist. Aaron made a hugely promising start in 2013's competition, with three high-scoring rounds. However, summer saw the points begin to dry up. Although Aaron diligently submitted every month, luck didn't seem to be on his side and he slipped away from the competition. That was until November,

when a pair of excellent high-scoring shots in the final two rounds sent his star shooting skywards once more, allowing him to ultimately pip contenders Neil Davies and Adrian Sadlier to third place.

'I was certainly surprised when I got the message to say I'd got third place,' Aaron says. 'After those months where I didn't get any points, I'd thought, "Well, I'll just keep on entering," but I didn't expect to win anything. I suppose photography is in the eye of the beholder, isn't it?'

STARTING BLOCKS

This was Aaron's first foray into APOY after he entered on the recommendation of a friend, and given that he was up against a cohort of old-timers like eventual runner-up Dan Deakin, he had a tough task ahead of

**Aaron scored
40 points for his
image in round 2**

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**Amateur
Photographer
OF THE YEAR
COMPETITION**

him. As you might expect, it took him a while to gain his confidence.

'I actually didn't enter the first round, Portraits in Artificial Light,' Aaron explains. 'The reason for this was that I felt I was quite weak at that type of photography. I just wasn't 100% sure what to do and I got too bogged down with it. After that, I said to myself, "What's the worst that can happen?" and made sure I entered every round.'

The next round, Life in Motion, would prove to be one of Aaron's success stories. One of his hobbies is photographing the London Underground, and the theme

 of the round perfectly suited the rush-rush-rush nature of our capital's Tube service, as any central commuter can attest. The image Aaron came up with, taken at Green Park Underground station (see page 25), earned him fifth place and 40 points.

'The idea there was all to do with the sweeping lines,' he explains. 'As you're looking at the image, you've got those green

lines curving around. I've always thought a fisheye lends itself well to Underground stations; it really exaggerates the natural curves that are there already.'

It took Aaron a while to perfect the shot, and he had to lean right back into the wall to get the perspective he wanted. Anyone who has ever done time on the Tube knows that 'abnormal' behaviour is quite thoroughly frowned upon, so surely this

Below left: This shot of a gull earned Aaron 27 points in round 3

Right: The Interior Architecture round saw Aaron attain his top score of 42 points in round 4



ALL PICTURES © AARON YEOMAN

Below left: Aaron found the Floral Still Life round the most challenging

Below right: By round 6, Aaron was in seventh place on the leader board but failed to score any points for this image



must have warranted a comment?

'I did get some funny looks,' Aaron admits. 'I was practically leaning on the wall, just waiting for one person to walk past so that the image would be nice and contrasty. This was the second or third attempt – the guy came past in his black suit and it worked perfectly as there was just enough blur. The fact that I tilted the camera also really helps bring the viewer's eye into the photo. It wouldn't have worked if it had been straight on.'





A THORNY PROBLEM

Aaron's spate of high scoring continued. When not taking pictures of the Underground, Aaron's passion is architectural photography, and it's no coincidence that when round 4, Interior Architecture, rolled along, he ended up achieving another fifth place and his highest score of the competition with a very respectable 42 points.

However, one cannot always be so fortunate. Round 5, Floral Still Life,

Below: There were no points for Aaron in round 7 or round 8 of APOY 2013

involved a genre of photography Aaron had never attempted before. In the spirit of the competition, he resolved to give it his best shot.

'That round was definitely the most challenging,' he recalls. 'I made sure I tried something – I did a picture of a rose with a macro lens that I then converted to black & white [see opposite page] – but it's not something I shoot regularly. It was my weakest round and I didn't score any points.'

This started Aaron's drought of points, and

for all intents and purposes it might have looked like he was out of the competition. It wasn't until Round 9 that he started to bring it back, with his spectacular entry for Going Abstract.

'That image was taken during Open House London,' Aaron says (which, incidentally, is one of AP's must-shoot events for 2014 – see AP 14 December 2013). 'It was inside the Allen & Overy building, at an art installation called Pixel Cloud. For this image, I was standing in the





ROUND 9 GOING ABSTRACT



ROUND 10 UNDER THE WEATHER

middle of a small bridge looking up, which created this awesome effect.'

The key to the image for Aaron, and something the judges praised him for, was its symmetry. It took him a few attempts to get his framing bang-on to create the effect he was after.

'It wouldn't have worked if it hadn't been symmetrical,' he says. 'I could have cropped it differently, and I did try a few alternative crops, but in the end this was the version that just worked. If you ever get a chance to go to Open House London, I highly recommend it!'

Aaron's abstract image was taken on a Sony Alpha 77, as were many of his APOY 2013 entries. A committed Sony man, he is pleased to report that he has recently made the jump to full frame with the Alpha 99.

'I went with Sony because when I first got into photography in 2009, I didn't want to spend too much in case I didn't enjoy it!' he says. 'But I found that I liked the Alpha 200 – I like the Sony menus, the tiltable screens, especially the EVF. I know a lot of

Top: Aaron took this shot inside the Allen & Overy building for the Going Abstract round

Above: A score of 38 points sealed third place for Aaron in the last round of APOY 2013

photographers don't like EVFs, but I like that what you see is what you get. I tried going back to an optical viewfinder recently, and it just felt odd.'

IN IT TO WIN IT

Aaron had his share of highs and lows throughout the competition, perhaps more extremely than any other entrant. However, if he's learned one thing from the competition, he says it's to stick to his gut instinct when it comes to his images.

'I've certainly learned that my favourite photograph is not necessarily a judge's favourite,' he says. 'But that's the way I looked at the competition the whole year, always going for the images that were my own favourites rather than trying to guess which ones would possibly win.'

This insular approach extended to the competition too. In order to remain focused, Aaron had to shut out the work being done by rivals such as Dusica Paripovic (who went on to win the competition) and Dan Deakin (who finished second).

'I tried to run my own race,' he says. 'I think you can look at other entries and be influenced by them without realising it. Now that the competition has ended, I'll enjoy Dusica's and Dan's work a lot more!'

Aaron, Dusica and Dan are all perfect examples of how close the APOY competition can be, right up to the end, and how no one should discount their chances until that final round. If you're fired up to enter this year's competition, though, you should know that Aaron for one is back for more.

'I'll certainly give it a go,' he says. 'I'm looking forward to it!' **AP**
● The prizes and rounds for APOY 2014 will be announced in AP 1 March

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APOLY 2013 Amateur Photographer OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

APOLY ROUND BY ROUND

Aaron Yeoman finished in the top 50 in five of the ten rounds of APOY. His highest position was fifth

Round 1 Portraits in Artificial Light

Position 00

Points 00

Round 6 People at Work

Position 00

Points 00

Round 7 Black & White World

Position 00

Points 00

Round 2 Life in Motion

Position 5

Points 40

Round 8 Wideangle World

Position 00

Points 00

Round 3 The Animal Kingdom

Position 21

Points 27

Round 9 Going Abstract

Position 11

Points 39

Round 4 Interior Architecture

Position 5

Points 42

Round 10 Under the Weather

Position 15

Points 38

You can see more of Aaron Yeoman's pictures by visiting his website at www.aaronyeomanphotography.co.uk

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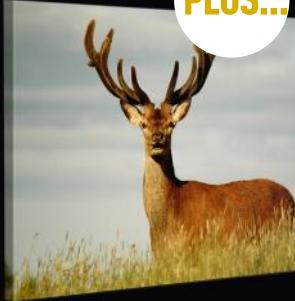
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2

John Earnshaw West Yorkshire

Having been interested in photography since 1965, John has accrued an extensive array of film and digital kit, including a Kodak Brownie, a Praktica Nova with 50mm Domiplan lens, a Nikon D700 and D5000; a Leica M2, M3 and M4, plus various lenses from 21mm to 90mm. John enjoys people and street photography, and the images on these pages are extracts from a book he has recently completed as a personal project, comprising shots taken in Egypt and the Middle East from 1992-011. John's aim for the future is simply to continue to enjoy his photography.

The Treasury, Jordan

1 The inclusion of the boys lends a twist to this archaeological shot
Voigtlander R2M, 35mm, 1/60sec at f/11, ISO 100

Giza Plateau, Egypt

2 A red filter was vital in ensuring the pyramid stood out against the sky
Voigtlander R3M, 21mm, 1/60sec at f/8, ISO 100, dark red filter

Taroudant, Morocco

3 John appears to have just caught his subject's attention in this classic street shot
Nikon D5000, 18-55mm, 1/125sec at f/5.3, ISO 200



3



Jerome Murray Coventry

Jerome is a wildlife and landscape photographer based in the UK, who is also a passionate conservationist. He enjoys roaming the UK searching out little-known spots. The images on these pages cover a trip to the Holywell Bay area of north Cornwall and the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire during a snowfall. To see more of his images, visit www.jeromemurray.co.uk.

Holywell Bay

1 The dynamic range of this shot accentuates the contrast between the wispy grass foreground and the rocks behind

Nikon D300, 12-24mm, 1/40sec at f/14, ISO 200

Malvern Hills

3 Snow can be a tricky subject, and Jerome has handled it well to create a balanced wintery image

Nikon D300, 12-24mm, 1/60sec at f/18, ISO 200

North Cornwall

2 The eye is led along the pockmarked sand of Holywell beach to the foreboding Gull Rocks in the distance

Nikon D300, 12-24mm, 1/6sec at f/20, ISO 200

Sand dunes

4 The light is falling on the sand perfectly at Holywell Bay, with the footprints forming a dividing line between light and shadow

Nikon D300, 12-24mm, 1/40sec at f/16, ISO 200

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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This is a lovely mono landscape that has a lot going for it. The partially covered path in the sand dunes gently leads the viewer's gaze down the beach and towards the stark rocks a little further out that are nicely silhouetted against the sky – *Phil Hall, technique/features editor*



1



2



3



4

1



2



Ryan Jardine Dumfriesshire

During his last year of school, Ryan, 19, wasn't entirely sure what he wanted to do when he left. By chance, a new subject had been added to the curriculum that year – photography. As it turned out, Ryan was quite good at it. As his passion is music, Ryan loves going to gigs and taking photos that capture the atmosphere of the crowd. 'I am constantly learning new things in the photography world,' he says. 'I have a lot of creative projects in mind.' To see more of Ryan's images, visit his website at www.jardinephotography.weebly.com.

The Temperance Movement

1 The reflection in the
guitarist's sunglasses
is a lovely touch
Canon EOS 1100D,
70-300mm, 1/800sec
at f/6.3, ISO 800

Up close

2 The long lens
allowed Ryan to
get close in on the
singer's face
Canon EOS 1100D,
70-300mm, 1/250sec
at f/5.6, ISO 800

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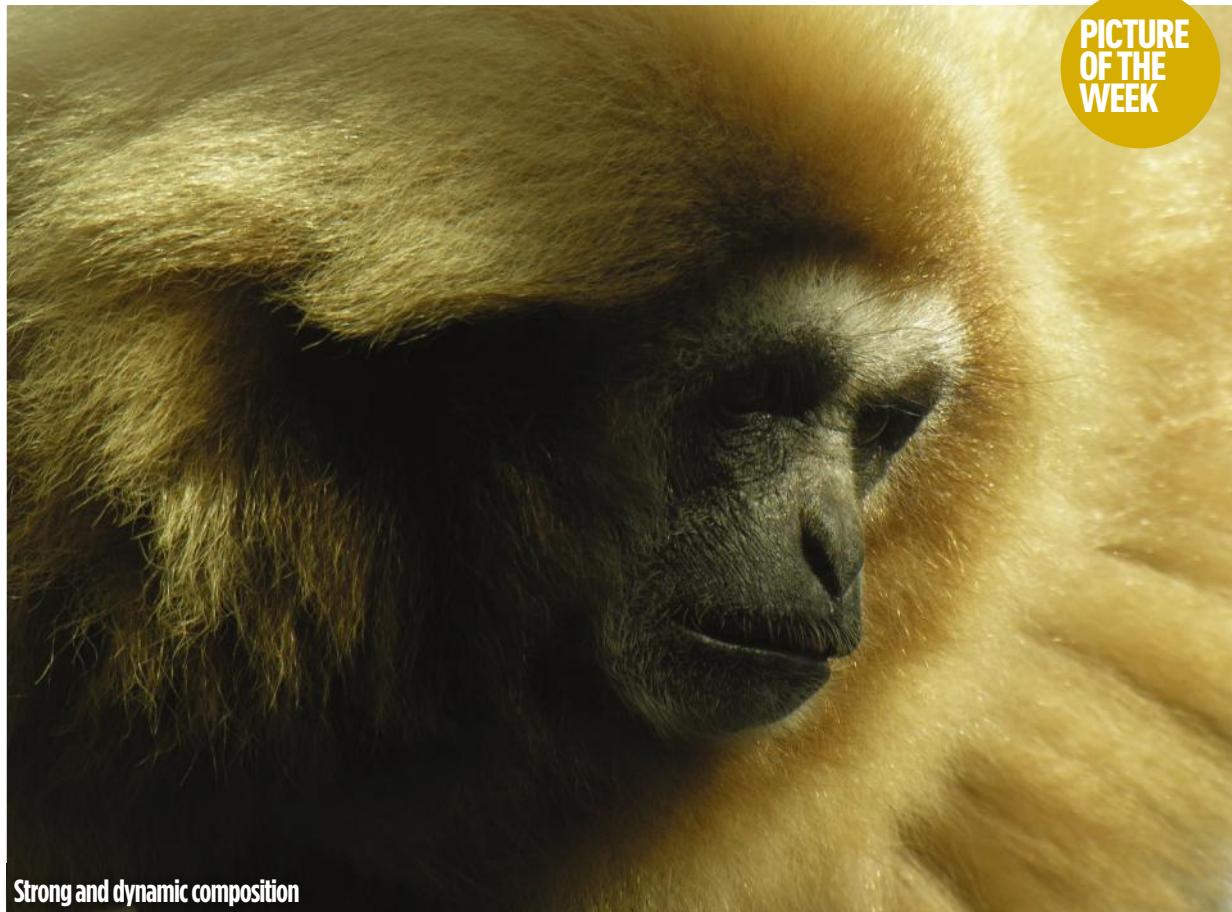
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Appraisal

Expert advice, help and tips from Chris Gatcum



Strong and dynamic composition

Monkey Face Matt Craven

Nikon Coolpix 8800, 350mm, 1/110sec at f/6.6, ISO 50

PHOTOGRAPHING animals in captivity is less difficult than photographing them in the wild, but that doesn't mean it's easy. You may know where your subject can be found in a zoo or a wildlife park, but even if it is confined to a certain area that's not the same as having it pose for you – it's going to move around or, worse, be sleeping in a dark, unviewable position. Even if you can see it clearly, there will be barriers between you and your subject, whether it's the bars of a cage, wire mesh or, as here, a heavy plastic window with scratches, marks and reflections.

With this in mind, Matt has done a superb job with this photograph taken at Twycross Zoo in Warwickshire. The framing, exposure and focus are as good as you could expect, and the use of an ultra-long focal length (350mm equivalent) and wide aperture

minimise the depth of field. This helps concentrate attention on the subject's face, and gets rid of any marks on the window.

The composition also works in Matt's favour, and his decision to choose a less conventional landscape orientation has created a really strong and dynamic image. He's used the rule of thirds, but this has been augmented by several other elements: the 'shadow triangle' coming in from the lower left corner acts as a pointer to the face; while the light halo on the right serves as both a framing highlight to the face and a natural 'stop' that prevents our gaze drifting.

There's very little to criticise. We could argue that catchlights in the subject's eyes would bring them to life a little more, or that the white balance is a tad too yellow, but neither detracts from this striking animal study, which is my picture of the week.



Shadow triangle



Light halo



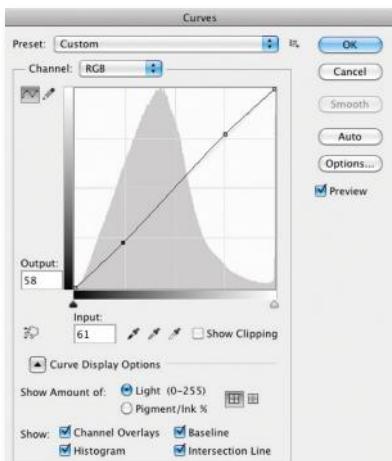
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Curves

Parish Church of St Johann in Tirol, Austria David Hunt

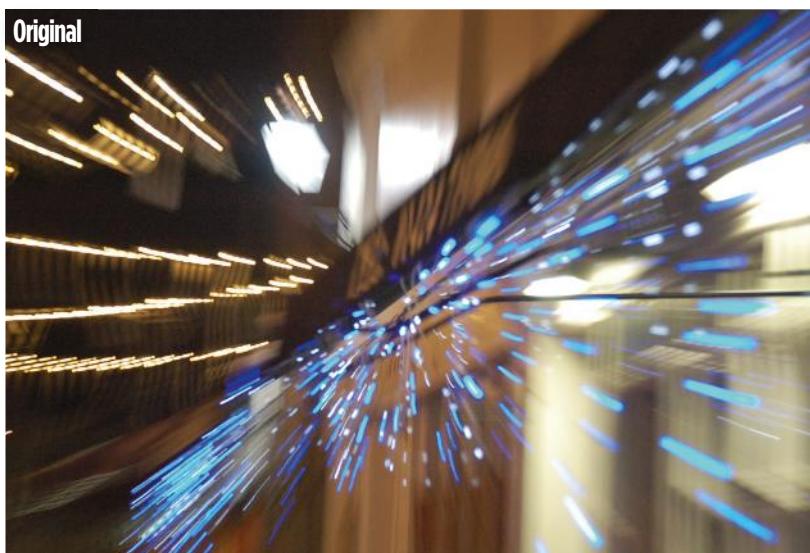
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 24mm, three exposures at f/8, ISO 640

YOU COULD be forgiven for having a slight sense of déjà vu with this image. In last week's *Appraisal*, I also featured a fundamentally symmetrical ecclesiastical interior that was, coincidentally, photographed by a man named David. However, here any similarities end.

Where last week's shot relied on shooting at dusk to tackle a high-contrast interior, this week's uses three different exposures combined to create an HDR (high dynamic range) image. What is refreshing is that (this week's) David hasn't attempted to include every possible tone in his HDR composite. Some people insist on including every last tone in a scene, but this is a sure-fire way of creating an artificial, cartoon-like image. By allowing the very lightest areas to burn out slightly, as David has done here, the image appears more natural. There's enough detail retained in the windows for us to

tell how they're constructed, but no need for us to see more. Indeed, this treatment perhaps more accurately reflects how we would view the interior through our own eyes.

Yet while the windows have been allowed to burn out slightly, I can't help but feel that the tonemapping of the interior has left it lacking 'bite'. Most HDR images can benefit from a contrast boost, and Curves offers a great way of doing this. Here, for example, lowering the left (shadow) end of the curve, while raising the right (highlight) end introduces a little more contrast. At the same time, the very ends of the curve (the black and white points respectively) haven't been moved, so there's no loss of shadow or highlight detail. In an instant, the colours are intensified and the interior gains a little more sparkle.



Zoom Ellie Tree

Nikon D50, 120mm, 1/20sec at f/6

THIS is one of a series of images from a school photography project about movement, taken on Hastings seafront in East Sussex by 14-year-old Ellie with her grandfather's DSLR. I have to admit that I'm not usually a great fan of zoom bursts, but in this instance I'd definitely make an exception. Whereas most zoom-burst images tend to rely on garish, oversaturated colours that scream for attention, Ellie's shot is much gentler and all the better for it.

The key to its success comes from the combination of colour contrast and tonal balance. If we simplify the image (using Photoshop's Crystallize filter), we can see that most of the image is made up of soft warm orange/brown tones. This is the perfect backdrop for the cool cyan-blue burst, creating a classic colour contrast of warm and cold.

There's also a beautiful balance in terms of the tonal values. If we reduce the image to just black & white, we can see that there's a clear diagonal split running from the bottom left to the top right, with dark tones primarily found at the upper left and lighter tones at the bottom right. Although there are some bright points in the dark area (and vice versa), the tones in the two diagonal halves of the frame balance each other out, so we aren't drawn to one particular area. Instead, our eye is free to roam the image and enjoy the abstract explosion of colour, which is precisely what makes this zoom burst one of the best I've seen in quite some time.

'Most of the image is made up of orange/brown tones, the perfect backdrop for the cyan-blue burst'



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Surf and turf

David Baker skilfully captures the tangible beauty of the UK coastline and countryside with his camera. He explains to **Jade Lord** how he works with the changing weather and light to create his painterly images

DAVID Baker's extraordinarily beautiful images of seascapes and landscapes may look like Photoshop trickery, but his methodology for echoing perfectly the textures, sounds and raw energy of the natural environment has nothing to do with post-processing. Instead, be it in his 'Sea Fever' series of seascapes or his 'Ridge Trees' documentation of the New Forest (close to his home town of Southampton in Hampshire), David's painterly and

ethereal images are the result of a fine understanding and appreciation of light and atmospheric conditions.

'My images are heavily dependent on the right weather and light,' says David. 'Wind, cloud and mist are important elements. It's also about shooting at the right time of day, which for me is at the crack of dawn, or sometimes very close to darkness.'

Occasionally, the weather itself presents the type of light seen at dawn and dusk:

David has become adept at watching weather patterns and now knows when they will give him the conditions he seeks.

'It comes down to experience and understanding how the weather will impact on the landscape,' he explains. 'I know, for example, that if you have a really heavy storm with some clearing light and you go to Southbourne Beach in Bournemouth, Dorset, you will get fantastic light. This means I can

From 'Ridge Trees'.
Puckpits, New Forest, a little after sunrise



ALL PICTURES © DAVID BAKER

 capture that lovely changeover between dark stormy light and clear light. With my 'Ridge Trees' project, which is always shot when it's misty, I know when to head off and shoot because I can hear the fog horn from the docks in Southampton.'

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

David's subject matter predominantly comes from the area around his home – the forests and coasts of Hampshire and Dorset. He therefore knows from experience what kind of light works best for certain locations, eliminating the need to spend days researching potential spots or avidly checking tide timetables.

'I think that if you set out to get a beautiful shot on a particular day, then you might be disappointed if the weather and light are not in your favour,' says David. 'I've been through all of that before, so now I'm very relaxed about shooting.'

David likes to get out and shoot as often as the conditions allow, and around twice a year he will journey to fresh locations, such as the Outer Hebrides. While he attempts to gain some local knowledge of an unfamiliar place by walking around and exploring before doing any shooting, David admits that sometimes he has to be a little more spontaneous.

Above: From 'Sea Fever'. 'Blue Rocks Reloaded', north-west Scotland

Right: From 'Ridge Trees'. Misty conditions in the New Forest a little after sunrise

Far right: Taken in Southbourne, Dorset



'If I get there quite late and the light is fantastic, then I have a mad scramble to get my gear together so I can start shooting right away!' he says.

IN THE BAG

David captures the way the light interacts with the environment, be it through trees or over sea, using his Canon EOS 5D Mark II, set up on a Gitzo tripod with an RRS

ball head (which he uses on almost every occasion). He uses just two lenses, one a 24–70mm and the other a 70–300mm.

'I used to shoot with a variety of lenses, including a very wide 17mm, but I got fed up of lugging it all around in a rucksack and having to change lenses balancing on my knee on a beach with a rapidly approaching tide,' reveals David. 'So I got it down to a two-lens



 system, and have a small selection of Lee filters, and that all goes into a Billingham shoulder bag.'

Narrowing down his lens choice has an obvious impact on how David composes his images. For example, in his 'Ridge Trees' series, he favours the use of the zoom lens for the way it compresses the image and creates perspective, drawing your eye through the trees. This choice also helps him to control the light.

'Using this lens, not only can I force perspective, but I can also disguise any bright bits of light that might be breaking through the mist,' he explains. 'With "Ridge Trees", I set very strict parameters, where it always has to be misty, always shot at dawn in the autumn or winter and shot in a particular triangle of locations. I don't need to use filters and there is scant post-processing: the mist diffuses the light and it's very straight with a beautiful backdrop. My choice of lens helps to compress all this and control the light.'

SENSORY EXPLORATION

Through his choice of lens and composition, David has successfully captured the tangible beauty of the forest, framing the chaos of the trees in autumn and winter. There is a real element of the tactile with this series, which is something true of his 'Sea Fever' series too. The fury and power of the movement of the sea in this series is almost too real, and where his images of the forest are very still, his seascapes are much more frenetic.

'I want the images to say, "This is how it feels to be at the shoreline", with the battering wind full of salt, the spray, the thump of the waves, the sense of vulnerability,' says David. 'It's the sound of the waves, the water over the stones as the stones knock together. It's such a sensory thing, I wanted to try to capture that.'

David has honed his exposure settings for his seascapes to a 0.3sec shutter speed at f/11, combined with either a Lee 0.9 ND filter or a Lee 0.9 grad filter, which he sometimes reverses. This shutter speed helps maintain

a sense of texture within his images.

'I find that a shutter speed of 0.3secs is a brilliant setting,' he says. 'I'm not concerned about getting my seascapes pin-sharp, but I do want to show the texture and the wave formations coming across.'

David places importance on capturing patterns and shapes within his seascapes, much like he is concerned with the forms of the trees in his forest images.

'I try to look for relationships between the waves and ideally clouds, so I often shoot very low, almost on the ground sometimes to exclude the horizon,' he explains. 'I aim to have at least a line of foreground or a central wave across the frame, and I like to follow a wave line that goes all the way across. After a while, you can sort of anticipate it: you can see a wave coming in, and as it just about reaches the outer corner of the frame I click the shutter and then it's gone across the frame. Shooting digitally allows me to click away, but I tend to anticipate the wave patterns after a while.'

Far right: From 'Ridge Trees'. New Forest

Below: From 'Ridge Trees'. 'March Trees, New Forest, Hampshire'. This image won the Your View category in the 2012 Take a View Landscape Photographer of the Year competition

To see more of David Baker's images, visit www.milouvision.com



MY FAVOURITE IMAGE 'HEBRIDEAN SEA III'

THIS image was taken in the Outer Hebrides in March 2012,' says David. 'During my previous trip there in February 2008, I had taken mostly long-exposure shots, as around this time there was a trend among landscape photographers to shoot in black & white with a 10-stop filter. But during my trip in

March, I didn't make a single long-exposure shot. Feeling a little unsettled, I started taking shots during the closing days of the trip to capture the sea's power in a way I had not undertaken before, this time using a slightly faster shutter speed.

'The first image, "Hebridean Sea III",

was uploaded to my photoblog in late April 2012 and that was that. This image kick-started the "Sea Fever" series and I have since taken images to complement this one, challenging myself to construct new and inventive interpretations of the relationship between the beach, sea and cloudscape.'

FINAL TOUCHES

This approach, like that of his forest images, gives David's photography an organic painterly air, rather than being an effect that is created afterwards. He does, however, engage in a little post-processing to tidy up his images, with tweaks made in Photoshop to clean up any dust marks, to crop his images further, and enhance the contrast with a bit of dodging and burning and some alterations to the curves. His seascapes are also sometimes honed further with a post-processing filter.

'I have developed a blue 'filter' in Photoshop that enhances some of my seascapes to give them a cooler look, but I try to use it as sparingly as I can,' says David. 'Most of the blues are there in the sea already.'

Indeed, David remarks that the UK coastline has much to offer in this respect, particularly in northern Scotland where many landscape photographers favour the stunning scenery and light conditions.

He also says the beaches here lend themselves to great landscape photography compositionally, too.

'In north-west Scotland, there is a beach that slopes right down to the shoreline so you can get right down low and, while getting very wet, feel the power of the waves right in front of you,' says David. 'You are constantly wiping your lens, but you have the opportunity to immerse yourself in it all from the beach. Likewise, Harris on the east coast of the Outer Hebrides has beautiful white sand, with aquamarine sea and beautiful greens. The colour is fantastic and draws a lot of people, so naturally that helps with the colour of images taken there if you capture them correctly.'

David will be hoping to do just that on his next trip to the Outer Hebrides, which he will be undertaking in the next few months. He will, of course, apply the same approach to shooting the coastline, this time challenging himself to capture the ideal image that he is always striving for.

'If I can get a nice triangle of waves or a zigzag of wave lines going across the frame, along with a line of cloud across the top and a decent wave line going across the bottom of the frame, I'd be very happy. Of course, that's incredibly rare, but that's what gets you out there.' **AP**

David Baker's 'Sea Fever' images are available in his book of the same title. Visit seafeverbook.co.uk for more information.



Ask AP

Let the AP team answer your photographic queries

MOVING TO FULL FRAME

Q I am looking to replace my Nikon D200

and go 'full frame'. I originally thought that the D800 would be ideal, dismissing the D800E because of possible moiré patterning problems due to the lack of an anti-aliasing filter. However, there seem to be more and more DSLRs being released without anti-aliasing filters, and I am now wondering whether I should consider the D800E.

My photography (strictly amateur) is primarily landscapes, but with some portraits, animal shots, macro work and the occasional motor race and air show. I have bought Tamron SP 24-70mm f/2.8 Di VC USD and SP 70-200mm f/2.8 Di VC USD lenses to use with the new camera, as well as retaining my existing Nikon 50mm f/1.4G and a Sigma 70mm f/2.8 EX DG macro lenses, which are full-frame compatible. Would this lens set do justice to a D800 or D800E, or should I perhaps consider a D610 and spend the money saved on a wideangle zoom, such as the Nikon AF-S Nikkor 16-35mm f/4G ED VR or AF-S Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8G ED? **David Knight**

A I'm usually slightly reticent when someone suggests upgrading a camera, because often the benefits of the upgrade don't really match the financial cost – upgrading last season's camera for this season's equivalent just because it has four additional features and a few extra pixels rarely makes sense to me. However, in this instance, I think that the D200 is starting to get a little long in the tooth, and I can see why you might want to move on from a 10-million-pixel, DX-format camera.

Yet despite the fact that the D800 and D800E are both great cameras, and you've got the budget for them, I would be reluctant to endorse the 'top-dollar' option. It was your final sentence that did it – the suggestion that a lower-cost camera body (the D610, pictured above) and a new lens would also be acceptable. For me, that makes a lot more sense, as lenses still matter most in photography. A top-quality lens will let you get the best from a camera, while a not-quite-so-special lens will

only limit its capabilities. I'm not saying the lenses you have are inferior, but expanding your range of focal lengths will enable you to capture images that a camera-body upgrade will not.

However, rather than a wideangle lens, you might want to consider something longer. A switch to full frame will mean no focal-length magnification on your lenses, so they will all effectively become wider than they were on your D200. As a result, a 24mm wideangle focal length will give you a 'genuine' 24mm angle of view, rather than a 36mm equivalent, and this may be wide enough for your landscape shots. In fact, it will allow you to shoot wider than was previously possible.

The trade-off is that you will lose the long end of the range – the 200mm setting on your zoom would no longer behave like a 300mm. Although that's unlikely to impact your landscape photography too much, it could prove detrimental to your motor-racing, air-show and wildlife photographs.

Chris Gatcum



ASK...

Be it about modern technology, vintage equipment, photographic science or help with technique, here at AP we have the team that can help you. Simply email your questions to: apanswers@ipcmedia.com, via [twitter @dap_answers](https://twitter.com/dap_answers) or by post to: **Ask AP, Amateur Photographer Magazine, IPC Media, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU.**

SLOPING HORIZONS



Q I have posted a couple of pictures on the AP Forum and people have said that the horizons are not straight. I have noticed this myself, so I set up my camera on a tripod at home recently and made sure it was level before I took some pictures. However, the horizons are still sloping down to the right, so could this be a problem with my camera? It's a Nikon D3100, and when I look back at my pictures they all slope off the same way, whether they were taken handheld or on a tripod. What could be the problem? **johnyyg**

A If all your pictures look like they are sloping to the right and you've taken test shots with the camera on a tripod, the only conclusion I can come to is a fault with the camera – a tripod would certainly seem to rule out a handling error. If the camera is under warranty I would definitely send it for repair, but if the guarantee has expired things could get expensive and the cost of repair could easily eclipse the value of the camera. You won't know for sure until you have it looked at, though.

In the meantime, how about mastering your software's 'rotate' and 'batch-processing' tools? I know it's not the ideal answer, but assuming the angle of tilt is consistent and your software allows it, you may be able to set up an action or script that applies a straightening 'counter-tilt' to batches of images.

Chris Gatcum

UNDERSTANDING RAW



My understanding was that a raw file could not be printed, and certainly my Adobe Camera Raw has no print option – I need to open the image first in Elements. Of course, ACR applies its own default settings as it opens the raw file, so I cannot ever see my original

DxO Optics Pro 9

AP GLOSSARY

Dynamic range

In this week's Ask AP, Stephen Shaw (below) comments on the importance of dynamic range, which is often discussed by photographers in relation to cameras, but rarely given as a measured figure by the manufacturers. In terms of a camera's sensor, dynamic range indicates the range from light to dark that can be recorded in a single exposure without the lightest area 'burning out' (turning pure white) or the darkest area 'blocking up' (turning pure black).

This range is most usefully expressed as a number of stops, and Stephen writes that his current camera has a dynamic range of 10.5 stops, while the camera he is considering upgrading to has a dynamic range of 12.5 stops. What this tells us is that if the difference between the brightest and darkest areas in a scene is less than 10.5 stops, a well-placed exposure using either camera

would be able to record all the detail in the highlights and shadows – the dynamic range of the scene is lower than that of the sensor.

However, if the scene has a dynamic range of 11.5 stops, only the second camera would be able to record all the detail. Stephen's current camera would either burn out the highlights or block up the shadows (or a little of both), depending on how the exposure was placed.

If the scene's dynamic range increased further – to 13.5 stops, perhaps – then neither camera would be able to record all the detail in the shadows and/or highlights, no matter what the exposure settings were. In this instance, the dynamic range of the scene exceeds that of the camera, meaning that some detail will be lost, and the smaller the sensor's dynamic range, the greater that loss will be.

file. How then does AP show 'the original raw file with no processing applied', as for the example on page 55 of the 4 January issue [see below left]? **Simon Robertson**

Any raw files shown are opened in Lightroom/Adobe Camera Raw and saved. Other than the defaults that the software is applying we don't touch anything. We try to make it clear when we have made further edits/adjustments by adding 'edited' or a similar label.

While some may argue that this is not a true reflection of the raw file, as each piece of software will make a different 'default' image, it is meant to reflect what most photographers will see as the starting point when editing.

If we were to show a completely 'raw' image it would be in black & white, as any colour values are only applied at the conversion stage. There would also be no contrast curve applied, so the images are often very flat. Although this may be a truer representation of what the camera produces in its raw format, it is somewhat abstract for most photographers.

Richard Sibley

DYNAMIC RANGE INFO NEEDED

QI think it is a shame and a bit of a disservice to AP readers who are seriously considering an important camera upgrade not to quote a numerical value for the dynamic range shown for the camera models that you test. My Olympus SLR has a dynamic range of about 10.5 stops, for example, which is limiting in some

scenarios, so it's useful to be aware of this. The dynamic range of the Nikon D700 (which I would like to use) is about 12.5 stops, which enables the recording of a much greater range of tones and colours. This is essential information to guide my future purchase choices.

Could you devise a standardised maximum dynamic range test (to give the number of stops between the earliest detectable shadow detail and last discernible highlight detail) for future camera models that are tested in the magazine? For new photographers, you could even include a footnote briefly explaining 'dynamic range'. **Stephen Shaw**

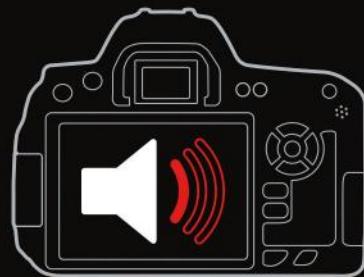
A We have just updated our testing equipment and software, and have a new dynamic range test that we will be using for all our cameras in the future. Currently, though, we quote a numerical value for the vast majority of system cameras we test – we have done this for a few months, but shortly we will also be showing graphs of the dynamic range at various sensitivities.

By comparing charts, readers will be able to compare the dynamic range of cameras across different ISO sensitivities to make a more informed purchasing decision. Where possible, we will also try to include the dynamic range of the previous version of the camera, so those thinking of upgrading can see if performance will be improved in this area. Look out for the new tests in a forthcoming issue.

Richard Sibley

DSLRs*

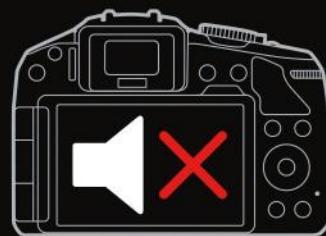
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AP Testbench

Over the next few pages we present this week's **equipment tests**, **reader questions** and **technique pointers**



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The reinforced base of the CoolWalker is shockproof and abrasion-resistant, and the rear is padded for comfort with an opening that allows it to be attached to the handle of a suitcase.

Despite this being the smaller of the two Messengers in this range, measuring 36.5x34x19cm, I managed to fit a 13in laptop, a DSLR, a 24-70mm f/2.8, a 50mm f/1.4, a 100mm f/2.8 macro and a flashgun into the M100N.

A built-in cover provides protection from the elements, and the entire camera compartment can be removed if used as an everyday bag. **Jon Devo**

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WITHOUT the use of electronics, the Rogue Safari DSLR Pop-up Flash Booster from Expolmaging is a specialised modifier that harnesses the power from a DSLR's built-in flash, using an optically engineered lens to concentrate the light into a narrow beam.

The resulting effect is a significant improvement in flash performance at focal ranges exceeding 70mm, which is ideal for shooting with a telephoto lens and creates better light coverage when photographing distant subjects. However, if used when shooting at a wide angle, the Safari creates an elliptical spotlight effect.

Designed to work with most APS-C/DX Canon and Nikon DSLRs, the Rogue Safari Pop-up Booster won't replace a dedicated external unit by any means, but if you're looking for something to improve your camera's built-in flash performance this is a great affordable option. **Jon Devo**

Amateur Photographer
Outstanding pop-up flash performance for the price



FORTHCOMING TESTS In the next few weeks AP hopes to run the following equipment through the most rigorous testing procedures in the industry...

Panasonic Leica DG Nocticron 42.5mm f/1.2 Asph Power OIS

We test Panasonic's Leica-branded, ultra-fast micro four thirds lens that is ideal for portrait shooting.

AP 22 February

CONTENT MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Fujifilm X-T1

We take a first look at Fuji's new CSC, which marks an entirely new line in the company's increasingly strong X-series.

AP 22 February

Micro SD cards

Used in everything from compact cameras to phones and tablets, we look at six of the best Micro SD cards.

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Sony Alpha 5000

Claimed to be the smallest and lightest Wi-Fi-enabled CSC, the Sony Alpha 5000 also has a 20.1-million-pixel, APS-C-sized CMOS sensor. We put it to the test.

AP 22 February

Six of the best

We take a look at six of the best light meters on the market today, from the most basic to state-of-the-art models.

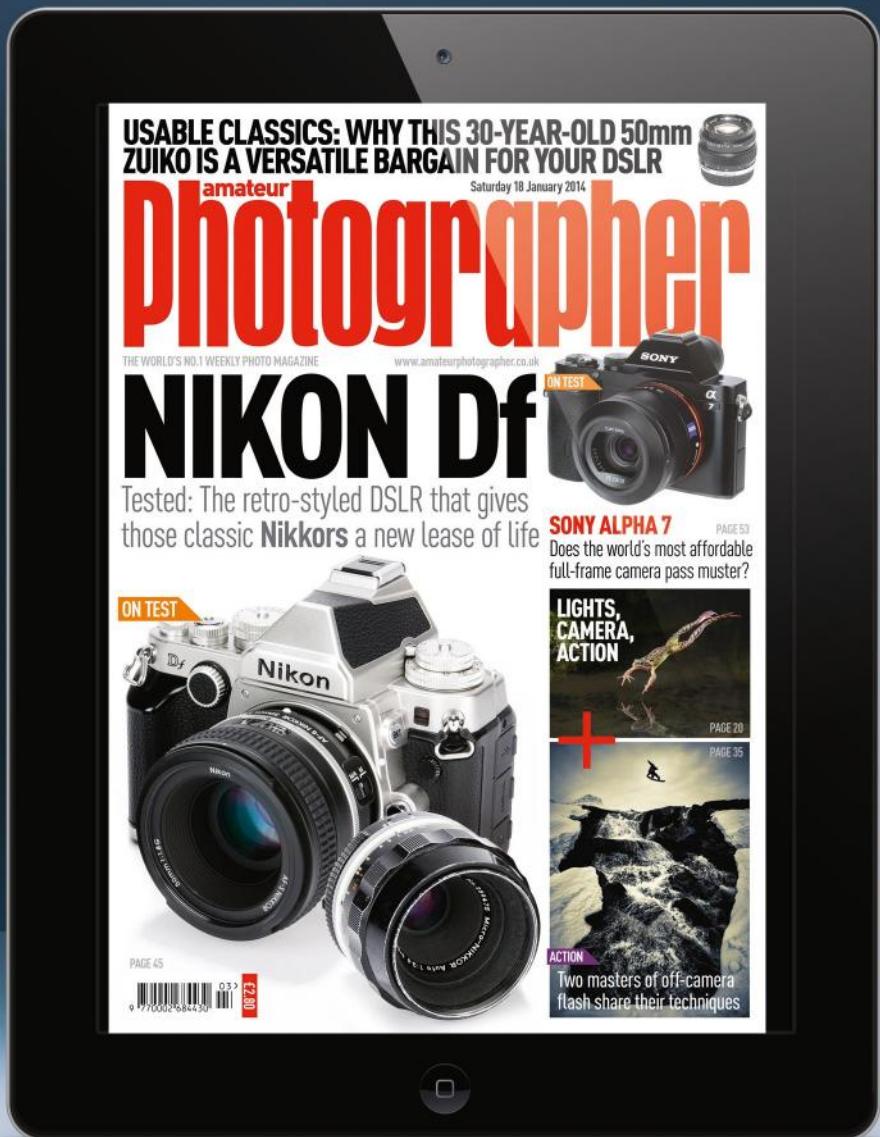
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Maximum resolution

Both the **Nikon D800E** and **Sony Alpha 7R** have 36-million-pixel, full-frame sensors, and achieve maximum resolution by not having anti-aliasing filters. But are the images identical, and how do the DSLR and CSC compare in use?

Michael Topham
Deputy technical editor

WHEN Nikon announced the launch of the D800 alongside the D800E in early 2012, it was hard to believe that behind the F-mount lay a 36.3-million-pixel sensor – the highest resolution of any DSLR at the time of its launch, and a claim that still holds true today. With both cameras becoming the hot topic of conversation among photographers, the photo press and the trade alike, it sparked a number of questions about whether such a high resolution was needed, how the enormous file sizes would be handled, and perhaps more fundamentally, who Nikon were trying to target as their audience with these high-resolution beasts.

Two years on, and we're left questioning why we ever doubted the D800/D800E's existence. Both have won an endless list of accolades, proving to be the choice of professional and enthusiast photographers around the world who demand the finest levels of detail from a scene using a camera that ticks virtually every box. I say virtually every box, because two things the D800 and D800E weren't successful at were being small and lightweight.

This opened up a gap for another manufacturer to take on Nikon's DSLRs. The manufacturer was Sony, which late last year released the Alpha 7R – the world's smallest full-frame system camera with an almost identical resolution to the D800/D800E, with 36.4 million pixels. With a promise of delivering Nikon D800/D800E quality in a smaller and more lightweight system, has Sony succeeded in producing the best high-resolution system camera to date?

Despite being a fraction of the size of the Nikon D800E, the Sony Alpha 7R features a full-frame sensor with an impressive 36.4-million-pixel resolution

LOW-PASS FILTERS

Before we delve deeper into the differences between the two cameras, it is important to clarify the reason for testing the Nikon D800E, rather than the D800, against the Sony Alpha 7R. The D800E is identical in every way to the D800 apart from the fact that it has a second optical low-pass (anti-aliasing) filter, which cancels out the effects of the first. The result is the equivalent of the D800E having no low-pass filter at all (which is the case with Alpha 7R), and leads to an increase in resolution and sharpness.

To ensure that our test was strictly comparative, we tested both camera models with each manufacturer's best prime lenses in the same focal length – the D800E with the Nikkor AF-S 35mm f/1.4 G, and the Alpha 7R with the Carl Zeiss Sonnar T* FE 35mm f/2.8 ZA.

THE SENSOR

The Sony Alpha 7R and Nikon D800E feature identical 36.8-million-pixel (actual) CMOS sensors, although there is a negligible difference in effective pixel resolution – 36.4 million pixels on the Alpha 7R and 36.3 million pixels on the D800E. As both sensors also share identical dimensions (35.9x24mm), it supports suspicions that each camera uses the same Sony-made unit. It's interesting that until now, Sony has never used this sensor in its Alpha line, instead



Nikon D800E



Sony Alpha 7R

 opting to use its 24.3-million-pixel chip – presumably due to the fact that it sold exclusive rights of the 36.3-million-pixel sensor to Nikon for a limited time period, which has since expired.

Unsurprisingly, both sensors produce a maximum image size of 7360x4912 pixels. Although both cameras essentially have the same ISO sensitivity output of 50–25,600, the D800E's native sensitivity range runs from ISO 100–6400, which means you must use the L1.0 or H2.0 settings to access the equivalents of ISO 50 and ISO 25,600 respectively.

The key difference regarding the sensor is how it is positioned behind the lens mount of each camera. Whereas the D800E's chip is set back behind the mirror and shutter mechanism, the Alpha 7R's sensor is much more exposed, sitting directly behind the smaller E-mount – one of the main contributors to its compact size. Although the Alpha 7R is compatible with Sony's E-mount NEX-series lenses, these were originally designed for use with an APS-C sensor and, as such, they don't have a large enough image circle to cover a full-frame sensor entirely. To overcome this, Sony's new FE series of full-frame lenses should be used. However, with a limited range of just four optics at present, the Alpha 7R starts on the back foot compared to the D800E, which is supported by Nikon's vast range of FX-format lenses.

FEATURES

Sensor and lens compatibility aside, the D800E uses an Expeed 3 image-processing engine with 14-bit A/D conversion and 16-bit image processing, whereas the Alpha 7R features Sony's new

Above: This scene was shot with the same lens attached to both the Nikon D800E and the Sony Alpha 7R. The lens used was the Nikon 20-35mm f/2.8D

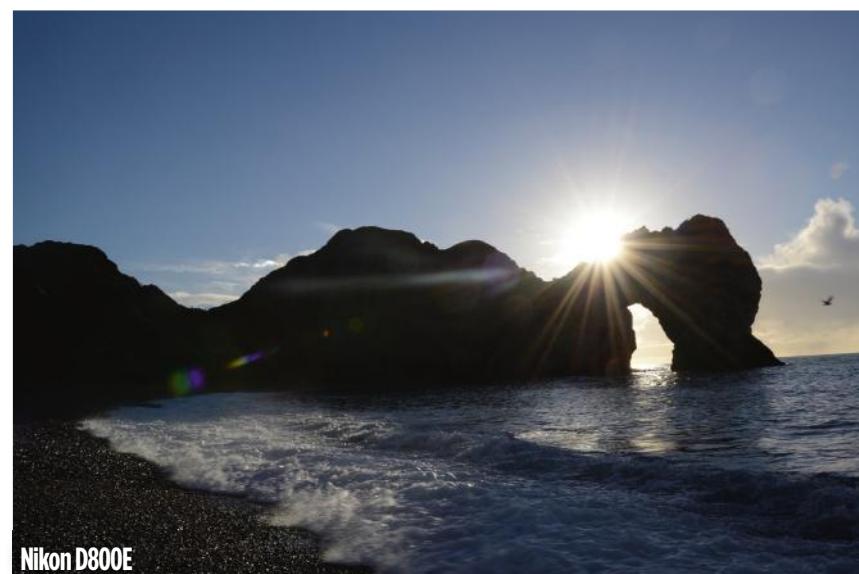
Below: Shooting into the sun was a challenging test and revealed that a good level of highlight detail can be recovered from the cameras' raw files

Bionz X processor with 14-bit raw output. Both support the use of optically image stabilised and non-stabilised lenses, with Nikon's VR II system and Sony's SteadyShot system claiming to allow users to shoot handheld up to 4 stops slower than would otherwise be possible.

The trade-off for choosing a camera with such a high resolution is its continuous speed. The large file sizes demand so much from the processor that neither camera can shoot at what we'd call a breathtaking pace. The D800E is capable of 4fps in its continuous high speed (CH) mode, which is a speed matched by the Alpha 7R set to its speed priority continuous mode. Loaded with identical SanDisk ExtremePro SDHC cards, the Alpha 7R sustained a continuous

burst of 15 raw files at 4fps, which is a lower figure than the 18 raw frames recorded by the D800E. Set to raw+JPEG, the Alpha 7R rattled out the same number of frames, while the D800E's count reduced to 16 frames. Switching to JPEG only, the D800E shot 32 frames at 4fps as opposed to 17 frames on the Alpha 7R.

As the Alpha 7R is smaller than the D800E, it has a smaller battery. Its rechargeable Li-Ion battery manages 270 shots compared to the D800E's battery, which is rated to more than 900 shots. To increase the battery stamina of the Alpha 7R, the VG-C1EM battery grip (£259) would be a worthy purchase. This, just like the camera body, is sealed to protect against dust and moisture.



Nikon D800E



Sony Alpha 7R

VALUE

THE D800E hasn't dropped far from its launch price and costs only £50 less today than it did two years ago. At around £2,350 body only, the D800E is Nikon's third most expensive DSLR behind the pro-spec Nikon D4 and the retro Df. While I am smitten by every area of its performance and handling, there's no doubt that the D800E is expensive when compared to the Alpha 7R, which costs around £650 less at £1,690. Sony's aspiration seems to have been to deliver the best full-frame quality at a more realistic price – something the firm has achieved with both the Alpha 7R and Alpha 7 – without having to cut corners in terms of build quality.

The Alpha 7R has become a standout product in the Alpha line and Sony should be commended for lowering the price of full-frame cameras in an attempt to bring them to a wider audience who want the highest levels of detail and sharpness in a more conveniently sized body. Without any glass attached, the Alpha 7R sounds a tempting proposition at an affordable price for the image quality it offers. However, at present there is a limited range of lenses for the Alpha 7R, and while the prices of Sony lenses are similar to those of other manufacturers – for example, the Sony Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar T* FE 24-70mm f/4 ZA OSS lens is around £1,050, compared to around £1,245 for the Nikon AF-S Nikkor 24-70mm f/2.8G – there are no lenses for the Alpha 7R that could be considered inexpensive. The Sony Carl Zeiss Sonnar T* FE 35mm f/2.8 ZA costs around £750, while the nearest equivalent Carl Zeiss lens for Nikon – the Distagon T* 35mm f/2 ZF.2 – costs a little more at around £910. However, the AF-S Nikkor 35mm f/1.8G ED is cheaper at around £520, and there is the older AF Nikkor 35mm f/2D lens, which is around £255.

No doubt the street prices of these new Sony FE lenses will come down, and Sony will introduce more affordable options. Meanwhile, there are various adapters, including Sony's own LA-EA3 and LA-EA4, that allow other lenses to be mounted. These allow full AF with Sony A-mount lenses, which significantly expands the range of usable optics. Standard E-mount lenses can also be used, although at a reduced resolution of 16 million pixels. However, until the range expands, if you want to use the dedicated FE lenses their cost needs to be considered.

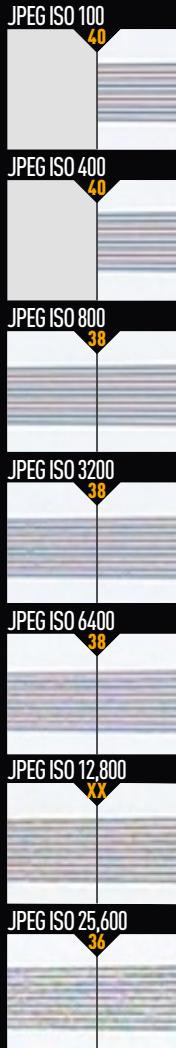
RESOLUTION AND NOISE



This scene was shot at ISO 200 using the same lens on each camera. Studying each file at close magnification (100%) reveals that a near identical level of detail is resolved from both 36-million-pixel sensors at the same sensitivity setting

These images show 72ppi (100% on a computer screen) sections of images of a resolution chart, captured using the Nikkor 35mm f/1.4G set to f/5.6 for the Nikon D800E and the Carl Zeiss 35mm f/2.8 lens set to f/5.6 for the Sony Alpha 7R. We show the section of the resolution chart where the camera starts to fail to reproduce the lines separately. The higher the number visible in these images, the better the camera's detail resolution is at the specified sensitivity setting.

Nikon D800E



Sony Alpha 7R



BUILD AND HANDLING

As you would expect from cameras aimed at targeting enthusiasts as well as professionals, the D800E and Alpha 7R feature robust bodies with magnesium alloy used in their construction. Added to this, both feature weather seals to prevent dust, dirt and moisture creeping past panels to the internals. This weather-sealing provides a full sense of security when the cameras are used in extreme and demanding conditions, and even when shooting in a downpour both shrugged off moisture with no apparent signs of water damage.

On the scales, the Alpha 7R body weighs 493g less than the D800E body, yet despite this considerable weight saving the Alpha 7R feels just as rigid. The Alpha 7R does lack the 'muscular' quality of the D800E that some photographers prefer, but the handgrip has been sculpted in such a way that your hand wraps around it very comfortably.

My only concern about the Alpha 7R's design lies with some of its buttons and controls. For example, the exposure-compensation dial on the corner of the body is easily knocked when in use. Also, the menu and zoom buttons, as well as the aperture-control dial, could benefit from protruding further from the body for

more comfortable operation. Of the two cameras, the positioning of the D800E's larger buttons and intuitive layout of controls around the body make it more instinctive to use.

AUTOFOCUS

For autofocus, and as you'd expect of a DSLR, the D800E relies on phase-detection AF, whereas the Alpha 7R uses a contrast-detection system that's suspected to be less responsive in low light. The Advanced Multi-CAM 3500FX AF module provides the D800E with 51 AF points compared to the Alpha 7R's 25 contrast-detection points. As neither model features a touchscreen, the AF points can be positioned via the body controls.

As mentioned earlier, the D800E is more instinctive to use. One example of this is when repositioning the AF target – something all photographers want to be able to do quickly with minimal fuss. While all it requires is a tap of the D-pad to move the AF point on the D800E, the Alpha 7R requires you to locate and depress a custom button beside the shutter on the top-plate first, which is a noticeably slower process.

Turning attention to the focusing speed, the Alpha 7R's autofocus detection range runs from 0EV to 20EV, whereas the D800E has a range that goes down to



Nikon D800E



Sony Alpha 7R



Nikon D800E

The Nikon D800E has a tendency to overexpose by approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ stop compared to the Sony Alpha 7R. This is obvious in the above image when studying shadow areas



Sony Alpha 7R

DYNAMIC RANGE

OUR DYNAMIC range test shows that the sensors of the Sony Alpha 7R and Nikon D800E are very similar. Generally, the D800E has the slightly better performance of the two at the most commonly used sensitivities (ISO 50-800), but as the graph (right) shows, there is generally less than 0.3EV difference across the entire sensitivity range.

At ISO 50, the 13.24EV range of the Alpha 7R and the 13.29EV range of the Nikon D800E make them virtually indistinguishable from each other, and the differences at other sensitivity settings can be put largely down to the difference in how each camera processes its images.

Out of our studio lab environment, the real-world raw images we took on each camera revealed that a high level of detail can be retained from bright highlights and returned to the darkest shadows. We rarely experienced any signs of shadows or highlights being clipped in our images other than when we shot directly towards a light source, such as the landscape images on pages 50-51. Even in such extreme lighting conditions, detail could be easily returned to the highlights using raw-conversion software. It was a similar story with the shadows, which rarely needed more than +2EV adjustment with the exposure slider to return detail to the darkest areas.

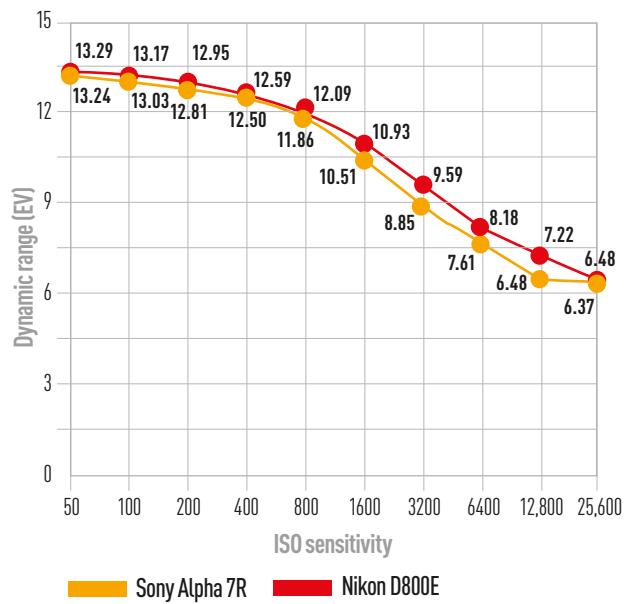
-2EV, which makes it the more responsive when faced with a low-light scene. Field testing in low light revealed that the D800E's phase-detection AF system was always the first to lock onto the subjects, with the Alpha 7R's contrast-detection AF system showing occasional signs of hunting before correct focus was achieved. The D800E is much faster when set to continuous AF too, with further signs of hunting from the Alpha 7R in a comparative test focusing between near and far subjects.

VIEWFINDER, LIVE VIEW, LCD AND VIDEO

The D800E and Alpha 7R have different rear screens and viewfinders. The Alpha 7R features an electronic viewfinder due to its mirrorless design, whereas the D800E's optical viewfinder with 100% frame coverage lies above a 3.2in, 921,000-dot display, which is larger than the Alpha 7R's 3in, 921,600-dot screen. Not only that, the D800E features a pop-up flash above the hotshoe that could be useful for fill-in light, while the Alpha 7R has only a hotshoe.

Whereas the D800E's screen is the marginally larger of the two, it is fixed, unlike that of the Alpha 7R, which is bracketed on a hinge that allows it to be pulled out and tilted down by 45° or up by 90° to aid low-level shooting. Both screens offer excellent clarity and sharpness for reviewing images, but regarding review and playback, the way the Alpha 7R zooms into 100% instantly after using the zoom button quickly becomes tiresome. There is no such problem on the D800E, which lets you zoom in and navigate an image in playback mode more gradually.

PERFORMANCE



Nikon D800E

RRP	£2,599 (body only)
Sensor	36.3-million-pixel CMOS
Output size	7360 x 4912 pixels
Lens mount	Nikon F mount
Focal length mag	1x
File format	NEF raw, JPEG, NEF raw+JPEG
Colour space	Adobe RGB, sRGB
Shutter speeds	30-1/8000sec
Viewfinder	Optical, 100% coverage
ISO	100-6400 (expandable to 50-25,600 equivalent)
White balance	2 auto, 6 presets, manual and 3 custom
AF points	51 points with auto or manual selection
Dimensions	146 x 123 x 81.5mm
Metering system	91,000-pixel RGB 3D matrix metering, centreweighted (adjustable), spot 91.5%

Sony Alpha 7R

RRP	£1,690 (body only)
Sensor	36.4-million-pixel Exmor CMOS
Output size	7360 x 4912 pixels
Lens mount	Sony E-mount
Focal length mag	1x
File format	Raw, JPEG, raw+JPEG simultaneously
Colour space	Adobe RGB, sRGB
Shutter speeds	30-1/8000sec
Viewfinder	XGA OLED EVF with 2.36 million dots, 100% coverage
ISO	100-25,600
White balance	Auto, 10 presets, Kelvin, plus custom
AF points	Contrast detection, multi-point (25 points), centre spot or manual selectable spot covering entire frame
Dimensions	126.9 x 94.4 x 48.2mm
Metering system	1,200-zone evaluative metering, centreweighted and fixed centre spot

While the D800E has buttons on the body for virtually all frequently used functions and modes, the Alpha 7R's body size doesn't allow for this, with settings such as white balance, metering mode and focus mode tucked away in a quick menu instead. As for the interfaces, the D800E's main menu settings are broken down into six categories just like those on the Alpha 7R. The only difference is that these are positioned at the side rather than the top, with the type being displayed on black compared to dark grey on the D800E.

WHITE BALANCE AND COLOUR

Comparing the same images taken on both cameras and studying the colour temperature in Lightroom revealed the Alpha 7R's auto white balance to have a tendency to produce images that are warmer than those from the D800E. I discovered this to be the case on a number of occasions in both raw and JPEG files, although the D800E's files need only a subtle tweak to the temperature to bring them up to a similar level of warmth to the Alpha 7R. Colour tones in each camera's raw files also appeared more faithful when compared to JPEGs – an excellent reason to choose the uncompressed raw file format over the compressed JPEG file format.

NOISE, RESOLUTION AND SENSITIVITY

Many of the images taken in our test were shot using the same lens – the Nikkor 50mm f/1.8D, which was attached to the Alpha 7R via an NEX-Nikon lens adapter. Our reason for choosing the older D-variant lens as opposed to a newer



Nikon D800E



Sony Alpha 7R



Nikon D800E

The in-camera processing that is applied to the 7R's images is a touch more aggressive than the D800E's. This can be seen in a magnified view of the JPEG images shown here



Sony Alpha 7R



Sony Alpha 7R

The Sony Alpha 7R's auto white balance tends to produce slightly warmer results than those from the Nikon D800E. However, only a subtle tweak with the temperature slider in raw conversion software was needed to bring the Nikon D800E's files up to the same levels of warmth

LENSES

THE NIKON D800E is supported by a vast range of full-frame optics, although the same can't be said at present for the Sony Alpha 7R. While an adapter can be used to attach Sony's A-mount or other full-frame lenses, it adds bulk and goes against the principle of the Alpha 7R being a small and light full-frame camera.

At present, there are only four optics that match the quality of what the Alpha 7R's sensor is able to deliver – the 35mm f/2.8 as used in this test, a Carl Zeiss Sonnar T* FE 55mm f/1.8 ZA, a FE 28-70mm f/3.5-5.6 OSS and a Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar T* FE 24-70mm f/4 ZA OSS. An FE 70-200mm f/4 G OSS will be arriving later this year, and up to 10 dedicated lenses will be available within the next few years, according to Sony.



G-series optic was that it allows us to take manual control of the aperture on both models. With each camera sharing the same sensor size and near identical effective resolutions, we predicted a comparable detail performance, which was confirmed by our comparison images

Our resolution chart tests were shot using the comparable 35mm lenses mentioned earlier. This ensured that the sensors could be compared using one of the best native lenses available to each camera. A close assessment of detail revealed that the results at ISO 100 were virtually identical, with both 36-million-pixel sensors managing to do what very few cameras are capable of – to outresolve our resolution chart's 40 lines per millimetre scale. It was a similar story at other low ISO settings, with detail only starting to drop off slightly at ISO 3200 on both cameras, more noticeably so above ISO 6400. Even at ISO 12,800, both sensors were resolving between 34 and 36 lines per millimetre, signifying an outstanding resolution performance. With virtually identical readouts throughout the ISO range, it backs up my earlier suggestion that both cameras employ the same image sensor.

Under close inspection, the noise performance of both cameras was identical. Clean, noise-free images are produced by both sensors between ISO 100 and ISO 400, with the faintest trace of colour noise entering at ISO 800. Colour noise becomes a little more pronounced at ISO 1600 and 3200, but this was removed effectively

using the colour noise reduction slider in both Camera Raw and Lightroom 5.

Both the D800E and Alpha 7R handle luminance noise very well up to ISO 6400, and with careful adjustment of the noise-reduction sliders at this sensitivity it is possible to create images with the faintest trace of luminance noise that has little effect on detail. Detail starts to drop off more noticeably above ISO 6400, and although ISO 12,800 could be used at a push, we'd consider ISO 6400 to be the limit to which we'd want to push the sensors in order to preserve the highest levels of detail and the best image quality.

The processing applied to the Alpha 7R's JPEGs is a touch more aggressive than that applied to the D800E's JPEGs, with images receiving a sharpness and contrast boost that's obvious when images are inspected alongside each other at high magnification. Whereas the D800E seems to apply just a little sharpening to help resolve detail in its JPEGs, the Alpha 7R's is more noticeable, with noise-reduction also more obvious.

As mentioned earlier, there are differences between JPEG and raw files regarding colour. Whereas the D800E's JPEGs appear to receive a saturation boost that's most noticeable in the greens, raw files represent more faithful colour to the scene photographed. While we'd say the colour balance is slightly better in the Alpha 7R's JPEG files than in the D800E's, for the best results from the Alpha 7R, raw should always remain the file format of choice. **AP**

Conclusion

ALTHOUGH the Nikon D800E and Sony Alpha 7R are very different in terms of their build and handling, the fact that they have the same resolution sensor means they are also remarkably similar. The incredible level of detail recorded by the 36-million-pixel sensors reveals virtually no difference in the level of detail that's recorded when subjected to a series of tests using the same lens. However, the different image processing applied by the two manufacturers does mean there are some subtle differences when examining the JPEG files from each camera. The D800E's JPEGs receive less sharpening, but also display a slightly cooler auto white balance.

The Alpha 7R offers a lot in a body of its size. To fit a full-frame sensor behind the E mount in a body a fraction of the size and weight of the D800E is very impressive. It proves that full-frame digital cameras don't need to be heavy or cumbersome. However, while the D800E is heavier – and more expensive – its superior handling and faster focusing give it the edge for more demanding photographers. I also prefer its optical viewfinder compared to the EVF of the Alpha 7R. The slower AF and shorter battery life of the Alpha 7R will also likely sway many towards the D800E.

That said, there will be some who look at the Alpha 7R as a way to reduce the weight on their shoulders, an in this respect the Sony camera is a good option. It is certainly not a compromise on image quality as it can match anything produced by the D800E.

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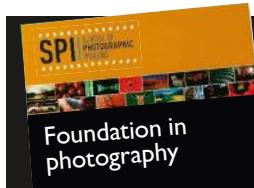


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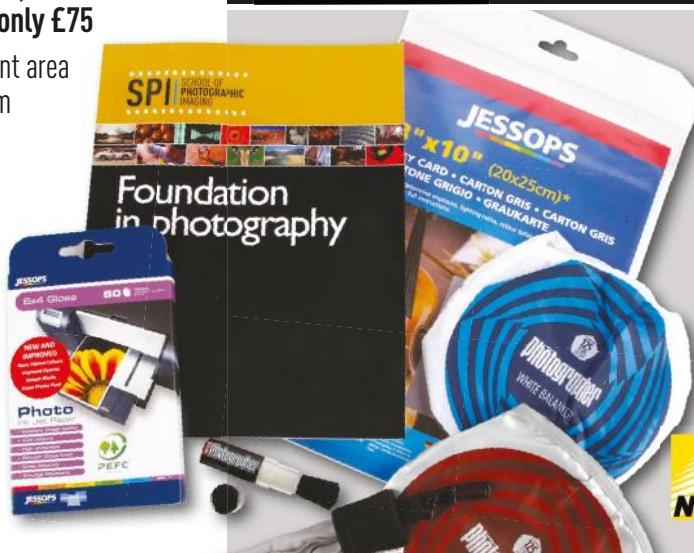


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Classics to use

Pentax *ist DL

Ian Burley investigates whether contemporary software can breathe new life into an eight-year-old Pentax *ist DL DSLR

OLDER DSLRs in good condition can be acquired, if you look hard enough, for as little as £100 complete with a kit zoom lens. That might already be most, or even all, of an aspiring beginner's budget. Although £100 could secure a used compact camera with decent specifications, or even a bridge camera, would you be better off investing in an older DSLR? Maybe you already have that older camera but, tempted by newer hardware, it has lain unused for too long. Could improvements in image processing software made over the past few years breathe new life into older cameras?

Before I started this article, I had a hunch that the steady development of post-processing software, particularly in raw-file conversion, would actually deliver improvements in image quality today that the original owners of these cameras would only have dreamed of. To test this theory, I dug out an eight-year-old Pentax *ist DL from my collection of gear. I also borrowed today's equivalent in the Pentax range, the K-500, to do some back-to-back comparisons. I would then use early era image-processing software and compare the results with those from contemporary software when processing the same image files.

SPECIFICATION

Pentax came relatively late to the DSLR game, launching the original *ist DL at the beginning of 2003, with availability at the end of that year. Pentax's fourth DSLR, the more affordable but lower-specification *ist DL, was launched 18 months after the original *ist DL became available.

The *ist DL borrows much internally from the original model, including the same Sony-sourced, 6.1-million-pixel, APS-C CCD sensor and image-processing pipeline. Similar Sony CCD sensors were used to good effect in several Nikon models like the



The 6.1-million-pixel Pentax *ist DL was launched in 2003

D70, and in some Konica Minolta DSLRs. The *ist DL may 'only' be a little over eight years old but its key components are actually more than a decade old – which is truly an age in digital camera evolution.

Luxury is not a word that you would associate with the *ist DL. There are just three AF points and none of these is illuminated in the viewfinder. Bizarrely, the current K-500 also fails to deliver illuminated AF points in the viewfinder. A single SD card slot limits you to cards of a maximum 2GB capacity. There is a decent 2.5in, 210,000-pixel LCD on the back, but live view wasn't introduced on a DSLR until the following year. At least there is a

top-plate status LCD. The TTL viewfinder uses a pentamirror arrangement instead of a solid-glass pentaprism. This makes the *ist DL lighter, but the viewfinder is not as bright and covers only about 95% of the frame.

Power is provided by four AA batteries or a couple of non-rechargeable lithium CR-V3 cells. There is no power/portrait grip option and neither is there a PC external flash sync socket. You won't find image stabilisation, nor a video recording mode. The supported sensitivity range spans ISO 200-3200 and the shutter speeds top-out at 1/4000sec. Pentax PEF raw files can be recorded, but not simultaneously with separate JPEGs. Shooting raw imposes a long wait while the image is saved.

One genuine attraction of all Pentax DSLRs is their compatibility with hundreds of K-mount lenses going back to the mid-1970s, although older lenses may only work with stop-down metering. Unless you have one

Controls on the Pentax *ist DL are simple but reasonably effective





Pentax *ist DL edit



Pentax K-500 edit

 of the more recent lenses that incorporate the focus motor in the lens, the *ist DL's focusing action via the in-body pin-drive is audibly obtrusive and unrefined. Cheaper Pentax lenses, like the standard 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 kit lens for the *ist DL, also suffer from an unpleasant manual-focus ring that is too narrow, underdamped and overgeared. The inexpensive 18-55mm kit lens, however, is not a bad performer for its class and a variant of this lens is still sold today.

Controls on the *ist DL are simple but reasonably effective, with a menu button for system level settings, a function button for adjusting key shooting settings, one thumb-operated adjustment wheel and a four-way control with a central OK button. The only other buttons, apart from the shutter release, are for viewing recorded images, deleting images, exposure lock, info, exposure override and deploying the pop-up flash.

Yes, the *ist DL is a very simple DSLR, even by 2005 standards. However, if you aren't interested in flashy modcons, the *ist DL is a camera with all the core essentials for serious photography. An inexpensive older DSLR like the Pentax *ist DL is an ideal introduction to system camera photography. It gives you a relatively large APS-C sensor that offers depth-of-field versatility and, certainly at normal ISO settings, refined image quality, all of which is hard to achieve with compacts and bridge cameras. But is the ultimate image quality of a camera that depends on 10-year-old imaging technology going to be a major obstacle?

IMAGE QUALITY THEN AND NOW

Things didn't start well. Although my own *ist DL had hardly been used, I quickly discovered that the camera was faulty with only black frames being recorded. Some web research revealed that other *ist D examples exhibited the same fault. Fortunately, AP had a spare *ist DL so I was able to use that.

Back in 2005, most DSLR photographers had yet to get to grips with raw-file post-processing and were much more likely to use in-camera JPEGs. Adobe, for example,

Although the newer Pentax K-500 has a greater dynamic range than the *ist DL, the older camera is still very usable, as can be seen in the highlight and shadow detail in the image above

wouldn't launch the original version of what is now one of the most popular raw conversion programs, Photoshop Lightroom, until early 2007. Until then, the cumbersome nature of raw-file processing limited its appeal. Early raw-conversion software wasn't just difficult and inefficient, but compared to today's software the potential for ultimate image quality was far from being tapped.

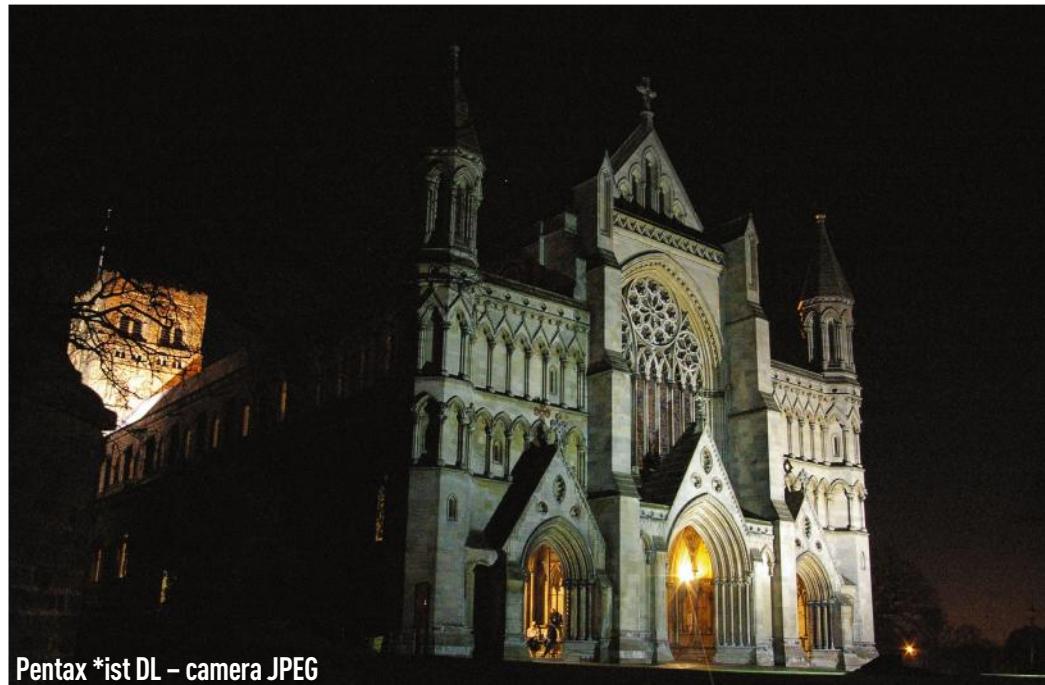
RAW FILES OVER TIME

Raw-conversion software has improved in leaps and bounds in recent years, and I have long suspected that older cameras capable of producing raw files can now deliver

noticeably superior image quality compared to when they were new. The *ist DL is an ideal candidate to put this theory to the test. I installed Lightroom 1.0 and processed a variety of *ist DL PEF raw files, comparing the results with in-camera JPEGs and the same PEF files processed in the current version 5.3 of Lightroom. The results were very interesting.

Even when using the old version 1.0 of Lightroom, I was able to produce better results from *ist DL raw files than JPEGs straight out of the camera. The camera JPEGs weren't terrible, especially when shooting in good light, but when white balance, high contrast and low light conspire

THE PENTAX *IST DL: EDITING RAW



Pentax *ist DL – camera JPEG

to challenge the camera, you can recover images with much more success using raw. In-camera JPEGs from the *ist DL are also a bit oversaturated.

Using Lightroom 1.0 serves as a reminder that it was a far from perfect solution back in 2007. In particular, its noise management and sharpening tools were primitive. Raw files processed in Lightroom 1.0 can retain more detail in high ISO shots compared to camera JPEGs, but I was sure that too much detail was being sacrificed in order to smooth noise grain. At higher ISO settings, Lightroom 1.0 was unable to fix chroma noise. Colour fringing along high-contrast edges (chromatic aberration) is frequently an issue with *ist DL JPEGs, but Lightroom 1.0 can do a reasonable job of correcting this. Some traces can remain, but this is much less pronounced than with camera JPEGs, which also don't suffer sharpening well, with the danger of ringing ever present.

UP-TO-DATE RAW PROCESSING

By far the biggest impact of using Lightroom 5.3's up-to-date raw processing was in controlling noise and retaining detail even at high ISO settings. In around 2009/10, I noticed that new sharpening algorithms were making their mark in some camera image-processing engines, and later the same improvements appeared in the better raw-conversion programs. Lightroom 5.3 not only deals with stubborn chroma noise in *ist DL raw files, but does so without sacrificing as much detail, even

PENTAX K-500

I also did some back-to-back comparisons with today's entry-level Pentax DSLR, the 16.28-million-pixel K-500. This camera's Sony-sourced CMOS sensor is highly regarded, but it was interesting to see that the old *ist DL wasn't necessarily blown away by its distant descendant. Thanks to modern raw-conversion software, and as long as the exposure was good and lighting wasn't challenging, even A3 prints from each camera were not easy to tell apart at normal viewing distances. I published images from each camera online at web resolution (900 pixels in width) and there was no certainty from any viewer about which camera took which shot.

Where the K-500 does knock out the *ist DL is in its ability to shoot way beyond ISO 3200 and, when needed, to withstand severe cropping. On paper, the K-500 has a couple of stops' wider dynamic range than the *ist DL but, once again, I was impressed with how well the older camera coped when pushed to the limit compared to the K-500.



when applying a fair amount of luminance smoothing. Benefits are more marginal with properly exposed images shot in good light, but micro-contrast is better, as is control of colour fringing.

CONCLUSION

I'm very encouraged by what the work for this article revealed. Lightroom 5.3 is by no means the best contemporary

Below: The higher resolution of the Pentax K-500 means that there is more image detail, and images printed at larger sizes do look better

raw-conversion program for ultimate image quality, but general improvements in raw processing since the *ist DL was launched in 2005 mean that the camera's potential has improved, like a fine vintage wine. If you are looking for your first DSLR, or if you simply want to be nostalgic, the combination of an older camera like the *ist DL and up-to-date software can add up to a surprisingly rewarding experience. **AP**

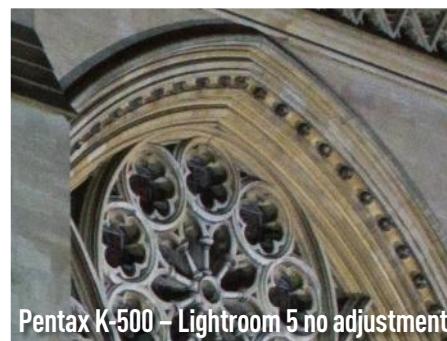
FILES IN CONTEMPORARY SOFTWARE



Pentax *ist - Lightroom 1 no adjustment



Pentax *ist - Lightroom 5 no adjustment



Pentax K-500 - Lightroom 5 no adjustment



Pentax *ist DL - Lightroom 1 adjusted



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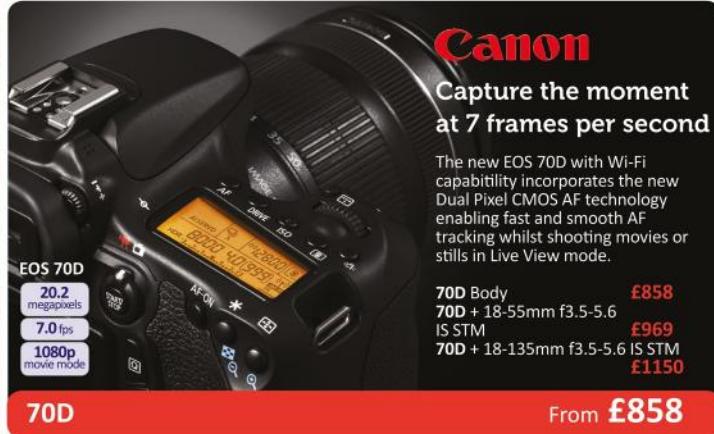
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Softlite Reflector Kits Inc Honeycomb & Diffuser:		3m Background Support		Light Stands		Softlite Reflector Kits Inc Honeycomb & Diffuser:		Rogue		INTERFIT		GOSSEN	
42cm	£49	From £10.99		From £10.99		42cm	£49	FlashBender	From £54.99	Folding Softbox	From £24.99	Reflector Bracket	£24.99
55cm	£69					55cm	£69					Off Camera flash Cord	From £30.99
70cm	£129					70cm	£129					Tilthead	£17.99
westcott		Lastolite		Ezybox		Ezybox Hotshoe		EzyBalance		Background Support		TriFlip Kits	
Micro Apollo	£25.99	Professional		From £44.99		Grey	£19.99	Background Support	£124.99	Urban Collapsible	£165	Reflectors:	
Collapsible Umbrella Flash Kit	£65											30cm	£12.50
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EF 35mm f2.0 IS USM	£489
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T0591-T0599 Set of 8	£99.99 set of 8	Check Website.	Lilly Inks
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T0594/5/6, each	£12.99 13ml	Check Website.	
T0597/8/9, each	£12.99 13ml	Check Website.	
T0611-T0614 Set of 4	£34.99 set of 4	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	D68, D88,
T0611 Black	£8.99 8ml	£4.99 21ml, 3 for £13.99	DX3800/3850, DX4200/4250, DX4800/4850
T0612/3/4, each	£8.99 8ml	£3.99 21ml, 3 for £10.99	Teddy Bear Inks
T0711-T0714 Set of 4	£34.99 set of 4	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	S20, S21, SX100/105/110/115/200/205/210/215
T0711 Black	£8.99 7.4ml	£4.99 13ml, 3 for £13.99	SX400/405/415/515, D78/92/120, B40W, BX300
T0712/3/4, each	£8.99 5.5ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	DX4000/4400/5000/6000/7000/7400/8400/9400
T0791-T0796 Set of 6	£74.99 set of 6	Check Website.	Photo 1400
T0791/2/3, each	£12.99 10ml	Check Website.	Owl Inks
T0794/5/6, each	£12.99 10ml	Check Website.	
T0801-T0806 Set of 6	£51.99 set of 6	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	Photo P50, PX650/660/700W/710W/720WD, PXT3700/WF800/FW810/FW830WF/B30FW
T0801/2/3, each	£8.99 7.4ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	R265/285/360, RX560/585/685
T0807-T0879 Set of 8	£74.99 set of 8	Check Website.	Photo R1900
T0870 Gloss	£7.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	Flamingo Inks
T0871/2/3/4, each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0877/8/9, each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0961-T0969 Set of 8	£74.99 set of 8	Check Website.	Photo R2880
T0961/2/3/4/5, each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	Husky Inks
T0966/7/8/9, each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T1281-T1284 Set of 4	£29.99 set of 4	£14.99, 3 sets for 4	S22, SX125/130, SX420W/425W/445W, BX305F
T1281 Black	£7.99 5.9ml	£4.99 13ml	Fox Inks
T1282/3/4, each	£7.99 3.5ml	£3.99 10ml	SX420W/425W/445W/525WD/620FW, BX305F/320FW/525WD/535WM/625FW/630FW, BX635FW/WD/EX925FW/BX935FW/B42WD
T1291-T1294 Set of 4	£42.99 set of 4	£16.99 sets of 4	Photo R3000
T1291 Black	£10.99 11.2ml	£5.49 16ml	Turtle Inks
T1292/3/4, each	£10.99 7.7ml	£4.49 13ml	Photo 2000
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200 F4.5 PS M-	£199	20 F1.8 EX DG box	£369	WLF early	£149	C330 S B/O + WLF	£149	55-300 F4.5/6.6 VR	£549	105 F2.8 AFS VR	£549	15-20 F4.5/5.6	£129	
2x PS converter M-	£179	28-300 F3.5/6.3 DG	£169	WLF early	£149	C330 S B/O + WLF	£149	55-300 F4.5/6.6 VR	£549	105 F2.8 AFS VR	£549	15-20 F4.5/5.6	£129	
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Speed Grip	£49	18-280 F3.5/6.3 XRD Di	£199	WLF early	£149	C330 S B/O + WLF	£149	55-300 F4.5/6.6 VR	£549	105 F2.8 AFS VR	£549	15-20 F4.5/5.6	£129	
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photographic

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OGDEN CHESNUTT

Ogden thinks that 2014 will be the year he wins big on the stock (photography) market

MY 2013 came to a rather unceremonious end, as I unashamedly shared with all of you. Except I was ashamed. Not for falling down drunk, but for having got through another year – at my age – without doing anything meaningful with my photography.

And it's not like I can even say I tried and failed. I just failed.

The morning after my New Year's misadventure I sat on my sofa eating cold nachos and coffee, searching my soul for reasons why I keep coming up with excuses – still, at my age – to not take pictures and, worse, not do anything with the ones I have taken.

Photography is one of my greatest passions, so why don't I do it?

I met Eli later that day, the 1st, for a hair of the dog, and found that he, too, was lost in the same dilemma.

'I want to be a working photographer more than anything – or even just make a bit of cash on the side,' he said. 'And it's not even about the money. My wife gets paid well. I guess it's a validation of my talent.'

'Your talent?' I asked.

'Well, my wife thinks I'm good!'

'No, you are good,' I told him. 'I feel terrible and my filter's gone so I can say this, but often when we're out I'm amazed at how effortlessly you can get creative compositions out of nothing. I'm looking for the big, bold subject matter and you can find a great picture in a puddle or a pile of newspapers.'

He looked at me like I'd just handed him a picture of myself naked. 'I'm... thank you, Ogden.' Then he smiled and bought me a pint.

He is good – and he's right. There's an element of every photographer who wants to be adored. Me, I'd just settle for the money.

In the depths of my hangover that morning on the sofa, I figured out where I've gone wrong all these years. I let my early failures in stock photography dissuade me from trying, and if I'm really honest I secretly appreciated it as they allowed me to justify my inherent laziness.

Like flatulence and Facebook accounts, everyone makes a New Year's resolution. And so I guess I

'In the depths of my hangover that morning on the sofa, I figured where I've gone wrong all these years'

should make mine. So here goes: 2014 is the year I will make money from stock photography.

My first attempts failed because I was too artistic – moody lighting and dramatic monochrome – but picture editors and designers can't use those.

For my next attempt I tried to be a jack of all trades. I thought I could take one picture of everything, and then watch my bank balance grow. But it didn't work that way.

Last year I met a man, a sculptor, on the bus. I can't say I've ever met a sculptor before, but apparently there are a lot of them because when I asked how he makes money from sculpting he said the key was specialise in something. He sculpts

animals. That's all he does. And he's the best at that.

If I'm going to make money at stock photography, I need to pick one thing and be the best at it.

A mate of mine in Northumbria used to photograph postmen, although he was a bit strange and I'm not even sure he was a photographer. But I could do that. Or I could photograph men in suits looking at their watches. Or women looking at their watches. And soon I could be the go-to photographer for any art editor in need of an image to illustrate a story about being late or keeping busy schedules!

Or perhaps I could specialise in petrol pumps. Rising fuel costs aren't going anywhere.

I told Eli about my plan, and his face lit up.

'It's like we have the same mind!' he said.

'I don't think I want to know what goes on in...'

'I've been thinking about the same thing! Except I'm going to specialise in animals,' he added.

'There's a lot of animals.'

'There are, and that's why I'm going to photograph only the animals that are most likely to go extinct.'

'Well, there's lots of those, too. And none of them live in London,' I said.

'The London Zoo, baby! There's enough endangered animals there to keep me busy. And when the last one dies in the wild, I'll clean up!'

'That's... pretty cynical,' I said. How do you even sleep?'

'Hopefully on a bear-skin rug!' **AP**

An avid AP reader since birth, **Ogden Chesnutt** lives for photography and the sound of a tripped shutter. In the third issue of each month he shares his photographic experiences and thoughts, as well as his adventures with his camera club friend Eli

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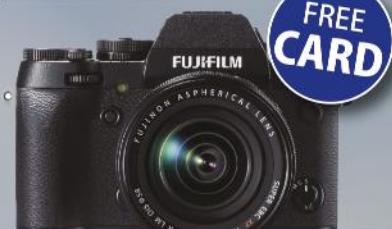
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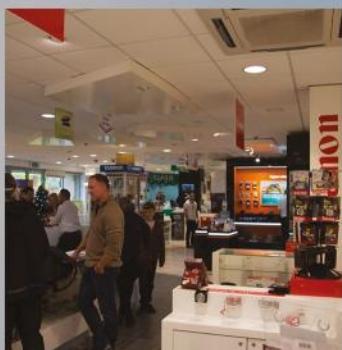
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